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# IN THE MAELSTROM

## Growing up under fascists and communists

An Autobiographic and Historic Narrative

by

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Anaheim, California
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Julius Scherzer: In the Maelstrom

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I have postponed until now writing about my experiences during the early part of my life. My profession as a scientist did not leave me sufficient time to write about subjects outside my field of scientific interest. Now that I have retired from my professional activities, I have started to do what I always wanted to do, but did not have sufficient time to do. On top of the list of "things to do" was to write an autobiographical narrative. My father often used the Latin proverb: "Verba volant, scripta manet" (Spoken words fly away, but written words remain). I remember him using these words when I was still a child, and I carried them in my mind all my life. As I grew older, I perceived this Latin expression as Father's early advice to put on paper the experiences and feelings from my past. By writing about my experiences under fascism and communism, I hope to provide the reader with an account of my life during a difficult and turbulent time in history.

Little is known in the West about the history and events that occurred in that corner of Europe where I grew up. I have therefore combined the autobiographical narrative with a description of the society I lived in and the historical events that affected and shaped it, with emphasis on the impact on Jewish and my family's life. By combining the autobiographical narrative with the historical narrative I hope to provide the reader with a clearer image and better understanding of both my personal life and that of the society I lived in.

There is another reason I have decided to write this account. In post-communist Romania, the country where I was born, there is today a tendency to deny or ignore the crimes perpetrated by the Romanian fascists against the Jewish population of Bukovina, the province where I spent my childhood and adolescence. A large part of my family was murdered during the war due to the close collaboration of the Romanian fascist regime with the Nazis. I owe it to those victims of inhumanity to ensure that the truth be told.

This account covers the first 35 years of my life. It is also a history of the countries where I lived during that time span, refracted through the lens of my own and my family's experience. When I started out writing about my childhood and adolescence, I was not sure how much I still remembered from those years long gone by. Soon, however, I discovered that traumatic experiences from the past are not easily forgotten. They emerge from the fog of forgetfulness, often in

stark and vivid detail. I discovered that Faulkner was right when he said that "the past is never dead, it is not even past". The passage of time has not been able to erase these experiences from my memory. Those were years of great upheaval in my personal life, in the life of my family, and in the world we lived in.

As a child, as a teenager, and later as a young adult, I have known dictatorships of the right and of the left. Under Romanian rule I have lived through the fascist regime of Goga--Cuza, the autocratic reign of King Carol II, and the military dictatorship of Marshall Ion Antonescu. I have known the dictatorship of Joseph Stalin under Soviet rule and that of Gheorghiu-Dej under Romanian Communist rule. I have also lived under more benign political regimes: parliamentary democracy, constitutional monarchy, and social democracy. I have experienced almost every European political system of the twentieth century.

Not much is known in the West about Romania and its history. What is known to the older generation is the bombing of the Ploiesti oil fields by American bombers during World War II. A more recent political event known in the West is the overthrow and execution of communist dictator Nicolai Ceausescu. Scant are the publications describing the events that occurred in Germany-allied Romania during the war, especially in the provinces formerly occupied by the Soviets. Little has been written about the early years of the Communist regime in post-war Romania. To provide a better understanding of my personal experiences and to see them in context with the world I lived in, I have added in many chapters of this narrative a brief description of the political, economic and social conditions that prevailed in society at that time. That is the historical aspect of my narrative

I hope that the reader will find my account interesting, instructive, and occasionally amusing.

Where was I born? I'm not sure how to answer that question. Was it Chernivtsy, or Cernauti, or Czernowitz? It is not that I don't know where I was born. I hesitate because the city where I was born has had in time numerous names, and I don't know which one to use. The same city has also belonged to different countries in the twentieth century. The city is called now Chernivtsi (the Ukrainian name), formerly Chernovitsy (the Russian name), formerly Cernauti (the Romanian name), and formerly Czernowitz (the Austrian-German name). There is a reason for this variety of names. Throughout the century diverse masters ruled the city, and each master gave the city a new name. When I was born there, the city belonged to the kingdom of Romania, and its official name was Cernauti. I arrived in this world in Romania, but my mother, who was born in the same area, is listed in her documents as born in Austria. A cousin of mine was born in the same city after World War II, but his birth certificate shows that he was born in the Soviet Union. Today, the city belongs to Ukraine. It may seem confusing but life itself in that part of the world has often been confusing. I am accustomed to calling the city Czernowitz, the name always used by my parents.

Czernowitz was the capital of the province Bukovina, located at the foothills of the northern Carpathian Mountains. The city was the administrative, economic and cultural center of Bukovina until 1940. In that year Czernowitz had a population of about 100,000. Between the two World Wars, the city's inhabitants were a motley mixture of Ukrainians (also called Ruthenians), Romanians, Jews, Swabian-Germans, and Poles, with a sprinkling of Russians (the Lipovan sect), Hungarians, Armenians, Slovaks, and Gypsies. Jews made up about half the city's population.

The province had a turbulent history. Being close to major empires--Austria, Russia, Turkey-- that shaped the history of Central and Eastern Europe, Bukovina has been a crossroad of history throughout the centuries. Roman legions, Polish princes, Turkish sultans, Austrian emperors, Romanian kings, and Russian dictators have ruled this province. The Austrians ruled the province from 1775 until the end of World War I, when the Austrian Empire ceased to exist. The kingdom of Romania annexed the province in 1919. It was its master until 1940, when it was forced by the Soviet Union to give up the northern part of Bukovina, including Czernowitz. In 1941, following the invasion of the Soviet Union by the German armies and their Romanian allies, Northern Bukovina came again under Romanian rule. In 1944, the advancing Red Army reoccupied Bukovina. The Soviet Union annexed again Northern Bukovina and incorporated it into the Soviet Republic of Ukraine. Southern Bukovina remained under

Romanian rule. In 1991, following the collapse of the Soviet Union, Northern Bukovina became part of Ukraine.

Czernowitz is situated on an old trade route used over the centuries by merchants from Central and Eastern Europe (Austria, Poland, and Russia) to carry their goods to the Ottoman Empire. It is located on the right bank of the river Prut, on hills dominating the surrounding fields and the Prut valley. To the west of the city are the Tsetsina woods. Two steel bridges, built at the beginning of the century, connect the city with the left bank of the Prut. One is a railroad bridge, while pedestrians, horses, and, more recently, automobiles use the other bridge. The road from the Prut valley to the city is quite steep. As a child, I often watched the sweat-covered, panting horses, foam dripping from their mouth, pulling creaking, heavy carts loaded with goods for the market. The horses were enticed to climb the steep hill with shouts and much whip cracking by cursing peasants. The demeanor of these screaming peasants frightened me. The courses, shouted in Romanian or Ukrainian, were the first words I learned in those two languages. Years later, when I was a schoolboy, I watched smoke-belching trucks and automobiles climb the hill with much less effort.

When I was born my parents gave me the name Julius, after my paternal grandfather. My sister, who was born four years earlier, was named Bertha after her paternal grandmother. Already in her childhood my sister was serious and had a mind of her own. In contrast to me, she was a quiet child and did not create disciplinary problems. When I was in grade school, after having a fight with my sister, I told her that I don't like her and wanted to know why I don't have a brother. She replied: "After you were born, our parents took a close look at you and decided not to have any more children." That is why, according to my sister, I have no other siblings.

The memories from my early childhood take me back to the 1930s. My parents had to put up a lot with me. I was not *artig* (well behaved). I was a wild and disobedient child, impulsive, and full of energy. I found mischief more fun than obedience. I preferred running to walking, fidgeted in my chair at dinner, and enjoyed doing things I was told not to do. I liked to run into the middle of the street, touch stray dogs, and was inclined to break china and glassware. My behavior often upset my mother and made my father resort to his Germanic method of discipline: applying his walking stick or belt to my backside. In those years we lived on the fourth floor of the Chamber of Commerce

Building in the center of the city. I loved to run up and down the stairs or slide down the railing, in spite of my mother's warnings.

One summer's day, while running down the stairs, I slipped, hit my head hard on the edge of a stone step, and started to bleed profusely. Mother panicked. She ran down the stairs with me, jumped into one of the horse-drawn carriages standing in front of our house, and rushed me to our family doctor, Dr. Noe. While Mother watched apprehensively, Dr. Noe washed the wound, shaved the hair around it, stitched together the gash on the back of my head, and covered it with a big adhesive bandage. Although I was frightened by the accident, I was even more scared of what would happen later. On the way home from the doctor's office I begged Mother not to tell Father about the accident. Father had told me repeatedly not to run down the stairs, and I was afraid of his reaction when he learned what had happened. Mother promised not to tell.

For the next several weeks, I wore my beret in the presence of my father so that he would not notice the bandage on my head. When he asked me why I was wearing the beret in the house, I said I was cold. He looked at me incredulously because it was a warm summer day, but did not ask any more questions. Luckily, he never found out the real reason. I still have the scar from that fall.

Several times a week Mother took me to the Schillerpark. To reach the park, we had to cross a large square named Elisabethplatz (Piata Vasile Alexandri in Romanian). In the center of the square was a small garden, which for some strange reason was called "The English Garden." After crossing the square we passed the impressive building of the National Theatre. Its façade was decorated with allegorical figures and classical Greek columns guarded its arched entrance. I always stopped in front of the theatre and admired the ancient Greek heroes gazing into the distance. I often wondered why they had their bodies wrapped in what looked to me a piece of fabric instead of wearing a jacket and pants like everybody else. Across the square was the imposing structure of the *Juedisches Nationalhaus* (Jewish Community Center), and next to it the *Musikverein* (Music Conservatory) building. A short walk behind the National Theatre, along the Schillergasse, led to the Schillerpark, a large park that sloped down towards the suburb of Kaliczanka. The park was named after the famous nineteenth century German poet Friedrich Schiller.

While walking to the park, Mother always held me firmly by my hand. Mother had good reasons to hold on to me. If she let go, I would run into the street, trying to catch one of the numerous pigeons that inhabited the city, or stop an oncoming car or horse-

drawn carriage. In the park, Mother kept a close eye on me, to make sure I didn't disappear among the bushes or get into a fight with other children. Most of the time, however, I played by myself.

I had few toys: a small rubber ball, a small tin bucket, a shovel, and a wooden hoop, which I rolled with a short stick. When I grew older I started to make my own toys. I carved a rifle from a wooden board using my mother's kitchen knife. I also had a soccer ball made from an old sock tightly packed with rags and sown by my mother in the form of a ball. The ball did not bounce, but it rolled and could be kicked. During one of my soccer practices in the kitchen, I found out that kicking the ball into a windowpane would crack it. I also had a few picture books and colored pencils. Sometimes, when Father was not home, I took the pack of tarot cards that he kept in his night table drawer and played with them. I spread them out on the floor and admired the strange, colorful pictures of angels, kings, knights, and knaves. I never had any fancy toys. I often watched with envy as other children rode their tricycles, and later, their bicycles.

On Friday afternoons, my father took me with him to the city steam bath. We called it the "Turkish bath" or, in Yiddish, *shvitzbood*. Nowadays such a steam bath is called sauna, like those I saw in later years in Finland. Our steam bath was located on Russischegasse, in the Jewish section of town. Few Jews could afford a bathing place of their own. On Friday afternoons Jewish men who wanted to cleanse and refresh themselves before the Sabbath visited the bath. The steam bath was open to women Friday mornings. The bath had three large rooms: one for dressing and undressing, another with a small cold-water pool and wooden benches for relaxing, and a third room for the steam bath proper. Naked men would sit or lie down in the steam bath room on wooden benches at different heights, perspiring profusely. The steam was generated by pouring buckets of water periodically over rocks heated by burning wooden logs in a special oven. The more courageous people sat on the top benches, where the temperature was higher and perspiration more intensive. Being less courageous, I sat on the lowest bench.

Never have I seen so many different naked men in one place. There were tall men and short men, hairy men and bald men, big-bellied, fat men and gaunt, skinny men, smooth-skinned, muscular young men, and wrinkled, flabby old men. All these men-folk were covered with sweat that oozed from every pore of their shiny skin. When not sitting on one of the wooden benches, they moved lazily in the hot, steamy atmosphere, beating their back and limbs periodically with bundles of birch twigs. Father

said that such beating helps stimulate blood circulation and cleanses the skin. To cool off, the people poured wooden buckets of cold water over their heads and their perspiring bodies. When they had enough steaming and perspiring, they took a dip in the cold-water pool in the resting room and relaxed on the wooden benches there before getting dressed. Father and I spent about two hours in the steam bath every week, and we came home refreshed and hungry. I found that whole experience quite enjoyable.

On Saturday afternoons, my father took me for a walk. From our house it was a short walk to the main square of the city, the Ringplatz (Piata Unirii in Romanian). In the summer Father would buy me an ice cream cone for one leu from a peddler who sold *Lodi* ice cream from a two-wheeled cart in the middle of the square. I always looked forward to the delicious treat. Three- and four-story buildings, erected in the neoclassical style surrounded the square. On the ground floor the buildings had spacious stores with big display windows, of which those of a chocolate and candy store attracted most of my attention. The Ringplatz was dominated by the imposing, four-story building of the city hall, with tower clock at its top. The clock rang every quarter hour. When the clock rang and we were in the square, father stopped, took out his gold watch from his vest pocket, opened its engraved lid, and adjusted the time. He then slid the watch back into his vest pocket, and we continued our walk. Below the clock was a number, changed daily, which showed the noontime temperature in the city. Summertime the temperature could be as high as 35 degrees C, while in winter it could drop to a low of –35 or even –40 degrees C. In the center of the square was the bronze statue of a Romanian soldier. He stood on a stone pedestal in a crouching position, with rifle at the ready, gazing into the distance. The statue was dedicated to the Romanian soldiers who died in World War I. I would stand next to the statue and admire every detail of it – the helmet on its head, the rifle with bayonet at its end, the pouch with bullets – until my father pulled me away. Behind the statue was the elegant hotel *Zum Schwarzen Adler* ("To the Black Eagle"), where important or wealthy visitors resided. Sometimes I sneaked in and admired the strange things on display in the lobby. The large hotel lobby was adorned with stately crystal chandeliers, brocaded curtains, huge oil paintings of pastoral scenes in gilded frames, bisque porcelain cherubs on black marble bases, and large thick Persian rugs with intricate patterns. When I asked Father why there are so many paintings, statues and carpets in the hotel lobby, Father told me that the decor was supposed to "give the visiting guest the flavor of Old Vienna." I did not know what "Old Vienna" was, but from then on I imagined it as a distant, fairytale-like city where each house had at its entrance

huge oil paintings in gilded frames, marble statues, sparkling chandeliers and multicolored rugs.

On Saturday night I went with Mother to visit my Grandparents, or went with Father to Druckmann's wine cellar. Mr. Druckmann, the owner, was a religious Jew with a black beard and sidelocks, who always wore a black yarmulka on his head. At Druckmann's wine cellar Father got together with a few friends once a week to discuss politics over a glass of wine. On those occasions I sat on a bench next to my father, but was attracted by the noise at the neighboring tables. Jewish university students were sitting at those tables, drinking wine or beer. Father told me that they belonged to the Jewish student organization *Hasmonea* or *Zephira* (the Romanian student organization *Junimea* did not accept Jews). They wore their organization's cap and sash, gave speeches, and sang *Gaudeo amos* and other student songs in Latin and German. I was impressed by the student's embroidered sash, by their dashing student caps, and secretly wished I had a cap like theirs. As time went by the revelers became more and more boisterous. Their songs resonated through the cavernous room, through the damp air loaded with the scent of alcohol. The drinking and singing lasted late into the night, until Mr. Druckmann told everybody with a firm voice that it was closing time. At that point we all got up and left. Everybody was in good spirits, including my father. Some of the students had to be helped to make it to the door. Later I learned that the students gathered at Druckmann's wine cellar to be out of public view. In the late 1930s, Romanian students and hooligans often attacked Jewish students, forcing them to meet in secluded places.

On Sunday, in fair weather, my parents went for a walk in the Volksgarten, a park located at the southern end of the city. They took me along, while my sister spent time with friends. In the summer, one could find many of the city's inhabitants in the park, trying to escape from the heat and stuffiness of their apartments. Dressed in their best cloths, the men wearing felt hats and the women elegant headgear, they walked leisurely on the neat, gravel-covered alleys, exchanging greetings with passer-by. Some sat on green-painted benches in the cool shade of an oak, acacia or chestnut tree, reading a book or newspaper. From the trees came the chirping of sparrows and warblers, while the soothing fragrance of blooming lilac filled the air. In the evening, young couples walked in the shadows, holding hands, and talking in subdued voices. On Sunday afternoons, a military band gave a free concert in the Volksgarten, which always attracted a large crowd. I loved to listen to the band and would try to get as close to them

as my parents would let me. The music was mostly by Strauss and Lehar, alternating with military marches and Romanian folk songs.

In the summer, on Sundays, the whole family took the tramcar to the Prut River for an outing. I loved the ride with the tramcar. I can still hear the screeching noise made by the tramcar around a curve, the bell ringing as the conductor warned pedestrians, and the hissing sound accompanied by sparks when the movable rods on top of the tramcar made contact with the power line strung out overhead. For the outing Mother carried a shopping bag filled with bread, vegetables and fruits, while Father carried a blanket. There were swimming and picnic areas on both sides of the river, between the pedestrian bridge and the railroad bridge. We crossed the pedestrian bridge and went to the Volksbad beach, where families with small children used to gather. Across the water was the Venezia beach, where the city's young people met.

I took my first swimming lessons in the Prut. Father was a good swimmer, and he taught me how to do the breaststroke. In the process, I swallowed a lot of water, and more than once Father had to grab my hand and pull me to the shore. Once, after splashing around not far from the shore, I tried to stand up in what I thought was shallow water, but my feet could not touch the ground. Terrified I started splashing and screaming, while swallowing big gulps of water. My father heard me and rushed to pull me out from the river. After a lot of coughing, spitting and nose blowing, I recovered. Mother was upset with father for not watching me, Father was upset with me for not staying close to him, and I was upset because I almost drowned. Later I learned that there were many invisible, deep holes at the bottom of the river made by exploding artillery shells during World War I.

As a little boy, I tried all kinds of experiments, some of which had painful consequences for me. Once, having nothing else to do, I decided to poured salt into mother's sugar bowl to see what would happen when sugar and salt were mixed together. It was probably the early chemist in me that made me do it. Since I didn't notice any change, I did not bother to empty the sugar bowl, and went on to do other important things. For the following day my parents had invited several of my father's colleagues and their spouses. It was one of those rare occasions when we had guests in our house. For that occasion mother baked one of her delicious chocolate cakes that she hoped will impress her guests. After the guests arrived and made themselves comfortable, mother served each of them a cup of coffee and a slice of cake. As soon as

the first guest took a bite of the cake, he made a grimace and promptly spit it out. Mother was horrified. She tasted the cake and found out that it was loaded with salt. Mother had used the sugar from the bowl to make the cake. It did not take long to find out who the culprit was. When the guests left, my behind took some serious punishment.

On another occasion, I made another experiment, which in modern, scientific terms could be called a "psychological" experiment. I took a nail and drove holes into the toilet paper hanging on the toilet wall. Then I waited to see who would be the first to walk into the toilet and observe that person's reaction. Unfortunately for me, it was my father. When I saw that, I knew I was in trouble. I retreated quietly to the bedroom, closed the door, sat down on the floor with paper and pencil, and started to innocently draw. I was deeply immersed in my artistic activity when the door flew open and my father entered the room, his face red with rage. With one hand he held up his pants, and in the other he held his belt. He obviously figured out who had put the holes into the toilet paper. Punishment was swift and painful. After that experiment, I decided it was a bad idea to put holes in anybody's toilet paper.

My father's first name was Joseph and my mother's Fanny. We children, however, called our father Tata, and our mother Mama. Once I asked my father to tell me about his childhood, about his past. He told me that his mother died at childbirth and that his father died in a fire at the Vienna Burgtheater at the end of the nineteenth century. An aunt raised him and his older sister, Laura. When Father was five years old, his aunt sent him to *cheder*, where he learned the *aleph-beth.* He went on to attend the Austrian elementary school, then middle school and eventually studied law at the University of Vienna. While in Vienna he supported himself by tutoring middle school students in Greek and Latin. After receiving his diploma, he started practicing law in Czernowitz.

Mother told me about her past. She was born in Molodia, a small town near Czernowitz. Her Yiddish name was Fayge, an abbreviation of the Yiddish word *Faygele* (Little Bird). Her father was a bookkeeper. Her mother raised five children: four girls and a boy. My mother's sisters were named Anna, Jetty, and Cilli, while her brother was named Joseph. My mother went to the Austrian elementary school and middle school in Molodia. After World War I her family moved to Czernowitz, and mother was sent by her parents to attend a school of commerce. After graduation, she worked as a bank clerk and later as a secretary in a law office in Czernowitz.

During my father's visit to the law office he met my mother. She was a very pretty young woman. She had short-cropped, chestnut-brown hair, bright eyes, delicate features, and milk-white skin. That is the way she looked in the picture that used to sit on her night table, taken when she was in her early twenties. She was much younger than my father, and he fell in love with her. In 1920 they were married at the Temple in Czernowitz. They rented an apartment on Elisabethplatz (Piata Vasile Alexandri in Romanian) on the fourth floor of the building that also housed the city's Chamber of Commerce. Father set up his law office in one room of the apartment. Mother helped out with secretarial work, mostly taking stenographic notes and typing. My sister and I were born in the same apartment.

During my childhood, Father was not a young man anymore. When I attended elementary school, he was already in his late fifties. He was short, but had a strong and sturdy body. He was bald, with gray hair near the temples. Father had green, penetrating eyes, bushy eyebrows, and sharp features. For reading he wore wire -rimmed glasses. The deep furrows on his forehead were mute testimony of a difficult life. He was always serious, rarely smiled, and was a disciplinarian with us children. He was also a very orderly, neat person, and always dressed impeccably: carefully pressed dark three-piece suit, crisp white shirt with stiff collar and white hard cuffs, monogrammed gold cufflinks and dark striped silk tie. I can still see the flowery JS letters engraved in his cufflinks. The tip of a white linen handkerchief stuck out always from his breast pocket. He kept his watch in the vest pocket, with the golden watch--chain hanging loosely from the vest's buttonhole. His elegant, black shoes were always shiny and spotless. Father was a heavy smoker, in spite of his frequent coughing, and the daily rolling of tobacco into cigarettes had left yellow-brown stains on his thumbs, index, and middle fingers. He always carried in his pocket an elegantly designed cigarette case made of Tula silver, bearing his initials and engraved with delicate flourishes. In the morning Father splashed some *Koelnischwasser* (eau-de-Cologne) on his face and filled the air with its aroma. After smoking several cigarettes, however, the smell of tobacco prevailed. Even his cloths smelled of tobacco.

Like many assimilated, westernized Jews, Father went to Temple only on the High Holidays. On those occasions he was elegantly dressed: he wore top hat, black tailcoat, black bow tie, white, starched shirt and shiny, black shoes. Besides fasting on *Yom Kippur* and eating matzah on Passover, Father ignored most Jewish religious

practices. Having grown up in a German-speaking environment, Father admired German efficiency and was strongly attached to German culture and customs. He revered the names of Goethe, Schiller and Heine, of Bach, Beethoven and Mozart. Except for the short time he went to *cheder*, his education and reading were exclusively limited to the German cultural sphere. He had no interest in Yiddish literature, theaters, or newspapers. Only upon my mother's insistence did he hire a young man to instruct me in Hebrew. The rise to power of Adolf Hitler eventually changed his mind about the Germans. At home we all spoke German, although occasionally my parents would sprinkle their German with Yiddish expressions, such as *weiss der reech,* (the devil knows), *loss mech up* (don't bug me) or *er is ah gahnev* (he is a thief).

Father and Mother had very different personalities. Father was stern, irascible, pedantic, precise in word and deed, and strict with us children (especially with me!). He showed a loathing for slovenliness of any kind. In other words, he was very "Germanic" in his behavior. Mother, on the contrary, was easygoing, had an even temperament, was orderly but not pedantic, and was kind to us children. However, she had certain opinions, which, under attack, she would defend vigorously. Mother was more inclined to celebrate the Jewish holidays than Father was—especially the culinary part. For Passover she made excellent *latkes*, and for Purim she made tasty *hamantashen*. While Father was interested exclusively in German-Austrian culture, Mother enjoyed not only German novels and poetry, but also Yiddish songs and theatre. In her younger years she was slender and walked with poise. Mother liked to dress well, although she avoided excessive elegance. The only makeup she used was face powder. Even so, she often attracted the glances of strangers. As a child, when we walked on the street, I remember passer-by turning their head and looking at Mother.

At times, my parents quarreled. The quarrel was about my father coming home late from Druckmann's wine cellar after spending an evening with friends, or about my mother's opinion of my father's friends. On other occasions they argued about my father's opinion of members of my mother's family (for reasons unknown to me, Father kept his distance from Mother's family). On such occasions, my parents switched from German to Yiddish. Apparently it was easier for them to quarrel in *mame-loshen*, their mother tongue. Sometimes the subjects of their disagreements were my father's clients. In these arguments, legality and morality were at loggerheads. Mother was always the champion of morality. Over the years, she had taken a dim view of some of my father's

clients whom she considered scoundrels and she was not happy when father represented them in court.

Such an argument erupted once when father came home from the courthouse and announced that he had been engaged by Mr. Rudenko to represent him in his divorce case. Rudenko, a wealthy landowner in his early fifties, was known for his rudeness, his heavy drinking, and the frequent beating of his wife, Milka. After twenty-three years of marriage to Milka, he had decided to divorce her. Mother had heard rumors that Rudenko had a young mistress and wanted to marry her.

When father said he agreed to represent Rudenko, mother became very upset. There was a sharp exchange between them. "How can you represent such a low-life and protect his interests? Everybody knows that he is a brute, a drunkard, and a wife-beater," Mother charged.

"He is entitled by law to be represented in court by a lawyer to protect him and his interests," Father replied with some irritation.

"To protect him and his interests?" said Mother bitterly. "It means that you'll present this brute to the judge in the best possible light, and you'll do your utmost to have him pay only a pittance to the poor woman he beat regularly, who suffered and slaved for him for over twenty years!"

"A lawyer has to defend and protect his client," Father replied, his voice loaded with annoyance. "In court I will present Rudenko's side of the case, the same way as Milka's lawyer will present hers. That will allow the judge to get an objective view of the whole case and enable him to make the right decision."

Hearing that, Mother really became fired up. "Since when do lawyers care if judges get an objective view and make the right decision? For you, the right decision means a decision in your client's favor! When you represent a client, you're just interested in winning the case, not see that justice is done. You couldn't care less about justice, only when you lose the case!" She than added: " Lawyers are always willing to manipulate the law, to use every technicality and every trick in the book to win the case".

Father naturally resented such a characterization of the practitioners of the legal profession. "I do not manipulate the law and I don't use any tricks in court. I always act in accordance with the law."

Mother was not ready to concede. "If Milka had asked you to represent her in court, you would have accepted, wouldn't you? In that case, you would have exposed Rudenko as a scoundrel and wife-beater, and would have asked the judge to make him

pay through his nose. But when a lawyer represents a robber or a murderer, he does his best to have the judge find his client not guilty or sentence him to the lightest penalty, regardless of how heinous the crime. Is that fair, is that just?" Mother stopped for a moment to catch her breath, then continued: "Don't you see how immoral it is, even if the law allows you to do that? Are lawyers supposed to give up their own moral principles once they start practicing law?"

Now Father felt offended. "I did not give up any of my moral principles. I was and I am an honest man. All I am doing is acting within the framework of the legal system of the society we live in. Naturally I will do my best to protect the interests of my client, just as the lawyer of the opposing party will do for his client. Listening to both parties, the judge can reach a fair conclusion and pass judgment according to the law. Would you rather live in a lawless society, where people did not have the right to be represented in a court of law? That would lead to chaos and anarchy!"

Mother did not give up easily. "I am not saying that a society without laws or a judicial system would be better. What I am saying is that a lawyer is willing to represent either party in a dispute, and will do it for the party that pays him, regardless of how guilty that party is. By shielding an individual who has done a vile deed, the lawyer ignores basic moral principles."

"In a civilized society, even a vile individual has the right to be defended in a court of law," replied Father at his wit's end. Then he took another tack he knew would bring the debate to a close. "If I would not defend Rudenko, another lawyer would do it, and I would not have the money you need to put bread on the table. Would you rather see the children go hungry?"

"That still does not make it right." Mother muttered. "I just hope the judge will see through all the legalistic tricks and make that scoundrel Rudenko pay through his nose."

Father went on to represent Rudenko in court. In the end, the judge decided that Rudenko had to pay a significant amount of money to Milka. Father and his client were not happy with the judge's decision, but Mother was very pleased with the outcome. Listening to those discussions, I think that that and similar debates in our house had made me in later years somewhat skeptical about the ethics of the practitioners of the legal profession.

Mother spent a good part of her time in the kitchen. She was a very good cook and could prepare some excellent dishes. I often stood next to her, watching how she

worked skillfully with her delicate hands, without notes or a cookbook. One of her specialties was pot roast braised in a delicious sauce, served with boiled potatoes and carrots. I also liked the borscht she made from red beets, which she served with boiled potatoes and sour cream. Another delicious dish was *piroshky* (Mother called it also *pirogen*) which consisted of little triangular pies made from flattened dough and a filling. Mother flattened the dough with a wooden roller, cut the dough into little squares, and added the filling to each square. She then pressed the dough together at the edges to form little triangles and boiled them in water. Mother used a variety of fillings: cottage cheese mixed with eggs, mashed potatoes with brown onion flakes or, in the summer, pitted sour cherries. Mother knew that I loved *piroshky* filled with sour cherries, and made them often for me. Occasionally, Mother made the Romanian dish *mamaliga* (the same as Italian *polenta*) by boiling cornmeal in water to make a paste, spreading it on a plate and covering it with butter and Feta cheese. At times she served *mamaliga* with *sarmale*(stuffed cabbage). I can still remember the smell of the steamy *sarmale* tickling my nostrils. But the best of all were Mother's pastries and cakes. In the mid-1930s, when we could still afford to buy all the necessary ingredients and they were still available in the market, Mother made some delicious cakes. I remember her *Nusstorte* (nut cake) and her *Schokoladetorte* (chocolate cake). For Purim, she made delicious *hamantashen*, filled with poppy seeds, honey and raisins. In the corner of the kitchen mother had an icebox, where she kept the foodstuff in the summer. The "iceman" arrived with a block of ice once a week to replace the melted ice in the box.

Although father was not a religious man, Mother prepared special meals for the Sabbath, Friday night and Saturday. The meal consisted of soup, meat or poultry, and fruit or a baked dessert. On Friday nights Mother also served baked fish, usually carp. There was always challah on the table, as well as wine for my parents and soda water for us children. Mother prepared the *braided challah* (in Yiddish we called it *koilitsh*) on Friday morning. Wearing an apron and with her sleeves rolled up, she kneaded the dough into a soft paste on her kitchen board, and let it sit to rise. She then divided the dough into three equal parts, rolled them into strips of equal length, and braided them together. Then she put the raw challah into a baking pan, let it sit again to rise, braised it with egg yolk using a small bundle of goose feathers, and baked it in the oven. The taste of freshly baked, fluffy challah, covered by a gold-brown, crispy crust, was delicious. While watching my mother, I often wondered how she could remember so many recipes

to make all that tasty food. Only years later did I realize that Mother had an excellent memory.

While Mother was cooking or cleaning house, she liked to sing. She had a soft, pleasant voice, and I enjoyed listening. I think that I inherited from her my joy of singing. She sang in German and Yiddish, songs she had learned early in her life in Austria. Most of the songs were sad songs, while others were from operettas. One of the songs was called *Sonia*. It was about the musing of a convict sent to Siberia for killing his love, Sonia, when he caught her in the arms of another man. It started like this:

Endlos, endlos, dehnen sich die Steppen
Vom evigen Schnee Sibiriens bedeckt,
Die Felsen ragen wie der Hoelle Treppen
Kein Sonnenstrahl eine Blumme aufgeweckt...(see attachment #1)

(Endless, endless is the immense steppe
Covered with eternal snow;
The rocks protrude like steps from hell,
A ray of sun has awakened no flower...)

Another song she used to sing was *Seemans Lohs* (Sailor's Fate) about a doomed sailor, trapped on a sinking ship on high sea. She often sang arias from Lehar's *Die lustige Witwe* (The Merry Widow), from Strauss's *Die Fledermaus*, and Joseph Schmidt's *Ein Lied geht um die Welt* (My Song Goes 'Round the World'). Her favored song was *Die Lorelei*, a highly popular German song, based on the lyrics by the baptized, nineteenth century German –Jewish poet, Heinrich Heine. In later years, in Nazi Germany, the author of these lyrics had been claimed to be "anonymous," in order to render Heine a non-person.

Toward the end of the day, when Mother had finished her daily chores, she would sit down with me at the kitchen table and read aloud children's stories or poetry. *Max and Moritz,* by Wilhelm Busch, is the first story I remember her reading to me, in German. It is the story of two little pranksters who played tricks on adults but were severely punished in the end. The story is well known in German-speaking countries. She also recited poems she had learned when she was a young girl in *gymnasium* (high school). Having an exceptional memory, mother could recite long poems she had learned in her youth, such as Friedrich Schiller's *Die Glocke* (The Bell), *Der Taucher* (The Diver) and *Die Kraniche des Ibicus* (The Cranes of Ibicus). Two poems of unknown origin to me that she learned in grade school were *Der Bettler* (The Beggar) and *Die*

*Baeume* (The Trees). I was fascinated by these poems, and learned them by heart (see attachments #2 and 3). Sometime she sang or recited a poem for me while she was preparing food in the kitchen or mending my socks. I stood near her, enchanted by her soft voice and lovely songs. Mother was happy when I was quiet and listened to her, since my other activities often were noisy or caused damage in the house.

Sometimes Mother would tell me about events in her life when she was a young girl. I remember my mother telling me about her experiences during World War I. She and her three sisters-Anna, Jetty, and Cilli-were young, pretty girls at the time. They attracted the attention of soldiers and officers of the different armies that moved through the village of Molodia, where the girls lived with their parents. Officers were frequently quartered in their house, and as the fortunes of war changed, so did the officers. First were the Austrian officers, then came the Russians, then the Germans, and then again the Russians. Regardless what uniform they wore, regardless to whom they pledged allegiance—the Kaiser, the Emperor, or the Czar-- they had one thing in common: they all liked young, pretty girls. When the officers got drunk, which happened quite often, they came looking for the girls. In those situations, my worried grandfather sent his daughters hiding in a barn next door. The girls climbed into the hayloft, pulled up the ladder, and hid under the hay. They were trembling and clinging to each other. They were terribly afraid of the drunken brutes in uniform. When the drunks could not find the girls, they started smashing glasses, dishes, furniture, and anything that could be broken. When they finally fell asleep on the floor, on a couch, in a chair, or sometimes in bed, my grandfather went to the barn and gave the girls the "all clear" signal. With hay in their hair and skirts disheveled, the girls climbed down from the loft, left the barn, and tiptoed to their rooms. In the morning, having slept off their drunkenness, the officers displayed again their usual polite behavior, as if nothing had happened the night before. Sometimes they apologized for wrecking their rooms, but usually they just ignored the chaos they had created. The Germans and the Russians were the worst of the bunch. They never apologized and behaved like true masters. When the situation on the front changed and they were forced to retreat, they left their rooms in shambles.

There were evenings when Mother used to read aloud to my father from a German novel. On such occasions, I sat on the floor and played with my picture books, while listening to my mother read, although I did not understand much of it at the time. I remember Mother reading *Die Buddenbrocks* and *Der Zauberberg* (The Magic

Mountain) by Thomas Mann, *Die Juedin von Toledo* (The Jewess from Toledo) by Lion Feuchtwanger, and *Joseph Fouche* by Stefan Zweig. This last author, who excelled in writing historical and psychological novels, was Mother's favorite writer. He was an Austrian Jew who later fled from the Nazis to Brazil. In 1942, when he learned about the atrocities perpetrated against the Jews by his former German and Austrian compatriots, he and his wife committed suicide.

The reading of stories and novels in our home probably planted the seeds for my future avid interest in books. During my teenage years, reading books felt like magic. They opened up a whole new universe to me. Depending on what I was reading, I experienced a whole gamut of emotions. I was held in suspense by an adventure story, scared when I read a thriller, amused by a funny episode, saddened by a drama, and dreamy when it was a romance. Books also gave me much intellectual gratification. When I grew up, they led me into the world of poetry, philosophy, psychology, history, and science. Books also became an escape from a depressing reality. Reading good books became one of my most cherished leisure activities.

As in many other middle-class Jewish homes in Czernowitz, we had a fairly good library. There were books everywhere: on shelves, on the table, on the dresser, and on the floor. There were luxury editions bound in brown or red linen embossed with gilded letters, hardcover books with leather backing, and paperback books. The works of German-language Jewish novelists, poets and play writes were well represented in our home. The shelves were lined with the works of Heinrich Heine, Jakob Wassermann, Arnold Zweig, Stefan Zweig, Lion Feuchtwanger, Arthur Schnitzler, Hugo von Hofmannsthal, Franz Kafka, Franz Werfel, Max Brod, Kurt Tocholski, and many other Jewish men of letters who had made an enormous contribution to German and Austrian culture. Of course, the works of great German writers and poets, such as Johan Wofgang Goethe, Friedrich Schiller, Gotthold Lessing, Johann Hoelderlin, Thomas Mann, Rainer Maria Rilke, and others were also present in our library. So were the works of great writers of the universal literature in German translation. As I found out later, German had been the language in which Jewish writers had made their most significant contribution to a nation's culture during the nineteenth and early twentieth century.

The fascination with culture was not limited just to our family. The members of the Jewish middle-class in our city were almost obsessed with culture. They called

Czernowitz "Little Vienna" and were proud of the cultural life in their city. People of every age read voraciously, went to the theatre, attended concerts, and participated in literary evenings. Fabulist Elieser Steinbarg read from his collection of fables, and poet Itzig Manger recited his latest poems in Yiddish. The *Hasamir* chorus performed regularly to a full house. Musical evenings were organized weekly at Dr. Rammler's apartment, a psychiatrist who was a strong supporter of the arts. There were numerous Jewish writers, poets, artists, art critics, journalists and publishers, whose prodigious work created a vibrant cultural life in the city. Some of them became famous in the German-speaking world. Jewish actors and actresses, who grew up in Czernowitz, performed regularly at the Hofburgtheater and Volkstheater in Vienna.

One of the artists, born and raised in Czernowitz, who became world famous in the late 1920s and early 1930s, was Joseph Schmidt. He came from a poor family, sang in the Temple chorus, and later, with the help of a wealthy supporter, perfected his voice at the conservatory in Vienna. He became the most famous singer in the German-speaking world, and sang frequently on radio Berlin before 1933. He also gave numerous concerts in major European cities. During one of his performances in Germany in early 1933, Hitler's propaganda minister Joseph Goebbels, who was in the audience, applauded enthusiastically. He reportedly said that he was going to have Joseph Schmidt declared an honorary Aryan. The singer apparently was not impressed. With the rise of Hitler to power, he fled first to Austria, and then to Belgium. When World War II started and the Nazis occupied Belgium, Joseph Schmidt fled to Switzerland. The Swiss put him into a labor camp, where he died of tuberculosis in 1942.

A place where I felt very comfortable was at my Grandparents. They lived on Karolinengasse, not far from where we lived. My grandfather was a tall, stout man with a short beard and dreamy, watery eyes. He spent a good part of his life studying the Bible and Talmud, and became knowledgeable in religious matters. He went daily to services in the small, Orthodox *shul* located next to the building where my grandparents lived. Once a week, a group of Jewish men got together with my grandfather in the *shul*, read a chapter from the Talmud, and discussed its meaning. Grandfather lead the discussion, and explained some of the more intricate points to the rest of the group. The rabbi and the congregation respected my grandfather for his knowledge and wisdom.

The grandchildren called grandfather Dziadziu and grandmother Baba. Although my grandfather spoke Yiddish at home with his wife and children, he spoke German

fluently and was quite knowledgeable in German literature. Having grown up in Austria, he spent a considerable amount of his spare time reading German and Austrian literature. He was an avid reader, and much of his knowledge he acquired through self-education. He was also familiar with German poetry, drama, and prose. Mother told me when she was a young girl, Grandfather had her sit next to him and read to her poems by Friedrich Schiller and Heinrich Heine, in German. Mother claimed that it was the reading by my grandfather that awoke her interest in poetry, an interest she maintained for the rest of her life. Later on, when I visited my grandfather, he also read to me some of those German poems.

Grandfather was an unusual man for his time. He was familiar with both religious Jewish literature, as well as with secular German literature. In the years preceding World War I, most Jews living in Austria were interested either in religious or secular matters. Religious Orthodox Jews studied the Torah and Talmud, while emancipated, secular Jews studied German literature and philosophy. Those knowledgeable in one area did not know and did not care much about the other area. Grandfather was an exception.

I remember Grandmother as a quiet person, with gray hair and a pale, gaunt face. She always wore a dark dress, and had her hair covered with a scarf, as was customary among Orthodox Jews. She had raised five children, not an easy task in those days. Whenever I visited my grandmother she asked me if I have been a good boy, and after my invariable answer "yes" she treated me with a slice of *leikah* (honey cake) or a *kichle* (cookie). Since Grandmother treated all the grandchildren with cake and cookies, we all loved her and liked to visit with her. Grandmother spoke Yiddish with us, as she did with the rest of the family and my first words of Yiddish I learned from her. She always called me *shein yinga'leh* (nice little boy), while stroking my head with her thin, bony hand.

My mother's oldest sister, Aunt Anna, lived with my Grandparents. Anna didn't have much luck in her life. She had married David Agatstein, with whom she had a son, Edi. The marriage did not last. After the divorce, Edi stayed with his father, while Anna moved in with her parents. She was withdrawn, rarely smiled, and her dark eyes were always sad. She did most of the chores in the house. When the family gathered Friday night at my grandparent's apartment, she was the one who served the family with sweets and tea. After having served everybody, Anna sat quietly at the margin of her chair and listened to the conversation, rarely saying a word. She often reminded me of Cinderella.

A younger sister of my mother, Aunt Jetty, was married to Bernhard ("Berl") Rosenbaum. They had a little girl, Gusta, who was three years younger than I was. Uncle Bernhard owned a hardware store, and worked late into the night in his shop. He had a high-strung personality, and rarely seemed to rest. He suffered from asthma, coughed frequently, and spoke with a raspy voice. That did not deter him from being a heavy smoker. Aunt Jetty came often to the store to help out with bookkeeping. On those occasions she brought along little Gusta, who sat next to her quietly, playing with her doll. Uncle Bernhard and Aunt Jetty were well off. Initially they lived in a small, one-family house. Later, in the mid 1930s, they build an apartment house near the outskirts of the city, on Wollengasse, and moved into one of the apartments. The other units were rented.

I loved to visit Uncle Bernhard's store. He let me play with the metal chains, dip my hands into boxes with shiny nails or screws, climb on the ladder and touch the different tools and gadgets on display. I always looked forward to a visit at his store.

Aunt Cilli was my mother's youngest sister. Her actual first name was Cecilia, but everybody called her Cilli. She had curled reddish hair, dark brown eyes, and a round, freckled face. When she was in her teens, her parents sent her to the "Morgenroit" school, a Jewish trade school in Czernowitz. She finished the school and became a skilled seamstress. With other young seamstresses Aunt Cilli worked in the shop of Mrs. Axelrod. It was a well-known shop that served the ladies from the Czernowitz high society. She used to sing and play the mandolin, and often entertained me with her songs when we visited her.

My mother's only brother was Uncle Joseph. He was nine years younger than my mother. Like his sisters, he was born in Molodia, near Czernowitz. When he was in his teens, he came under the influence of socialist ideas, and became a member of the "Bund", a Jewish-socialist organization. In the 1930s, he joined his father in running the stationery store that my grandfather had set up after World War I in Czernowitz.

In the late 1930s, Uncle Joseph married Ruchel Schauer, a quiet, shy person. In 1939 they had a child, Eli. Both Joseph and Ruchel loved the outdoors, and were avid hikers. In the summer, they hiked almost every weekend in the woods of Tsetsina, or went swimming in the Prut. Often they took me along on their hikes in the woods. With knapsacks on our shoulders and in high spirits, in the early morning hours we walked energetically past the Schillerpark towards the Tsetsina woods. We would spend the day walking for hours on narrow, meandering trails, collecting blackberries, picnicking in the

shade of tall oak and beach trees, quenching our thirst in the icy water of a mountain spring, inhaling the cool, fresh air, and listening to the chirping warblers. During those walks in the woods I learned to enjoy the beauty of nature, and later became an avid hiker myself.

Twice a year, Mother did grand house cleaning: before Passover in the spring, and before Rosh Hashanah in the fall. Most Jews of the city, rich and poor, religious and secular, kept the custom of thorough housecleaning in the spring and fall. Religious Jews did it to comply with tradition, while secular Jews did it for hygienic reasons. Spring-cleaning started a week before Passover. Mother would clean our apartment from top to bottom. She polished the furniture, wiped the stove and kitchen shelves clean, dusted the pictures on the walls, and went down on her knees to scrub the kitchen floor with a stiff-bristled brush. She took the rugs outdoors and beat them furiously with a rug beater made of braided reeds. The silver candlesticks and brass door locks were polished with a soft cloth until they gleamed. Mother gave a special thorough cleaning to the dishes, pots, and pans she intended to use during the eight-day Passover holiday. She called the cleaning of dishes for Passover *kashern*. Mother told me that some people had an extra set of Passover dishes that were stored during the year and used only during Passover. Since we did not have an extra set, Mother had to *kashern* some of our everyday dishes. I am not sure how those dishes differed from other clean dishes, but mother said that according to tradition only *kashered* dishes might be used on Passover. She had learned that custom from her mother. On the last day before Passover she removed all the *chametz* from the house. For the next eight days, instead of ordinary bread we ate matzah, potato latkes, and matzah-meal pancakes. From Mother I learned that the unleavened bread was meant to be a reminder of the hasty departure of the ancient Israelites from Egypt.

Passover is a joyous festival, since it commemorates the Exodus from Egypt and the liberation from slavery. The holiday starts in the evening with the Seder. With his ambivalent attitude towards tradition, Father did not participate in the Seder, although he liked the Passover food. On the evening of the first Seder, Mother took us children to our grandparents. Aunt Anna and Aunt Cilli, as well as Uncle Joseph, were also present. For that occasion, everybody wore their best clothes. I had been washed and scrubbed clean by my mother and was dressed in my navy-blue suit. We sat around a long table covered with a white, embroidered tablecloth. In the middle of the table were

Grandmother's two silver candlesticks, each crowned by a tall, lighted candle. Next to the candlesticks was a stack of three matzahs, covered with a colorful embroidered matzah-cover. Close to the head of the table was a Passover plate filled with symbolic foods used during the Seder ritual: a shankbone of roast lamb, hard-boiled egg, bitter herbs, sweet *charoset*, honey, and horseradish.

Grandfather sat at the head of the table in a large armchair, with a pillow behind his back for greater comfort, as required by tradition. He wore a *kittel*, the white shroud-like garment worn by Orthodox Jews on this occasion. With his white beard, white *kittel* and *yarmulka* on his head, he looked to me like a biblical figure from the distant past. In front of him was the Haggadah, the Hebrew book with illustrations that described the Exodus of the Jewish people from Egyptian bondage. The Haggadah was worn and discolored, proof of its repeated use for many Seders in the past. Every member of the family also had a Haggadah placed next to his plate and a glass filled with wine. A special cup of wine was set aside for the prophet Elijah, just in case he decided to drop in. Being the youngest family member present I asked in Hebrew the traditional *kashes*: why is the night of the Seder different from all other nights of the year? Grandfather replied by reading to us from the Haggadah about the events of the Exodus. When he recited the names of the ten plagues God visited upon the Egyptians, he dipped the little finger of his right hand into his wineglass for each plague, each time spilling the drop of wine that clung to his finger. At certain passages in the Haggadah he served each of us little pieces of the symbolic food from the Passover plate. Everybody drank generous amounts of wine as required by tradition for this occasion.

While Grandfather and the rest of the family were reading the Haggadah, I was busy with something else. At the beginning of the Seder, while everybody was watching, Grandfather concealed a piece of matzah called the *afikoman*, behind the pillow he was leaning on in his armchair. Tradition has it that if a child can "steal" the *afikoman* during the Seder, he can "ransom" it at the end of the meal. It is said that the rabbis devised this game to prevent the children from falling asleep during the lengthy ceremony. Naturally, I was interested in getting that piece of matzah, and I had already made plans as to how I would spend the ransom money in the candy store. But first I had to steal the *afikoman*.. While Grandfather was reading aloud the Haggadah, I sneaked twice behind his armchair and tried to grab the matzah from behind the pillow. But Grandfather noticed it and stopped me. Only towards the end of the Seder did Grandfather cease to

pay attention at what I was doing—or made me believe so—and I was able to steal it. I could barely wait for the end of the evening to cash in the ransom.

When Grandfather finished reading the lengthy Haggadah story, Grandmother and Aunt Anna began serving an elaborate meal. It started out with matzah-ball soup, and was followed by boiled chicken with *kaizelach* and apple-*tzimmes*. There were on the table also potato *knaidlach*, *kugel* and honey carrots. For dessert, Grandmother made fruit compote. The wineglasses were constantly refilled during the meal, so that soon everybody was cheerful and in high spirits. Mother gave me a glass of club soda instead of wine. Only occasionally did she allow me to have a small sip of wine. The meal was concluded with a glass of tea. The whole family closed the Seder service with the cheerful singing of *Chad Gadya*, a Passover song. I gave Grandfather the stolen matzah, and received in return five *lei* as ransom money. At the end of the long evening, after Grandfather had said the after-meal Grace, my belly was full, I had five *lei* in my pocket, and I was very sleepy. The excitement of the *afikoman* hunt and the few sips of wine may have been the culprits. Holding on to my mother's hand, half-asleep, I was barely able to walk home.

The city had a variety of houses of worship. Near the center was the dome capped Eastern Orthodox cathedral, which served the Romanian population. There were Catholic churches with neo-Gothic towers, Protestant churches build in the Baroque style, and an Armenian Church with Moorish decorations, all serving the Ukrainian, Polish and German population. At the edge of the city was the palace of the archbishop of the Eastern Orthodox Church, a very large, imposing, red-brick structure, with towers, domes, and glazed, colored roof tiles. It was the largest building in the region. I never entered any cathedral or church in my childhood, since Mother told me that I might be thrown out or even beaten if people in church recognize that I am a Jew. I didn't quite understand why I would be beaten up, but I decided not to take the risk.

The Jews had their own places of worship. When the High Holidays arrived, my parents took me to the Temple. It was an imposing structure and stood on a hilltop that dominated the city. The tall, massive walls of the Jewish Temple were topped by a row of small turrets, and the deep, arched windows were decorated with stained glass brought from Italy. A large dome, visible from every corner of the city, crowned the massive structure. The services held at the Temple were considered at the time as "modern" and were similar to those held today in an American conservative synagogue.

During the High Holidays, the Temple was filled to capacity. On that occasion, leading Christian personalities of the city—the prefect, the mayor, judges, leaders of churches—were invited to the services, and given seats of honor. Many intellectuals and secular Jews, including my parents, who rarely set foot in a place of worship during the year, attended services in the Temple during the High Holidays.

In the 1930s, until the invasion of the Soviet Union by the Nazis in 1941, the services in the Temple were officiated by Rabbi Dr. Abraham Mark. He was a graduate of the Vienna University with a doctorate in philosophy, and completed his rabbinical studies at the Jewish Theological Institute in the same city. I learned later that he was the author of several books on Jewish theology, had given numerous lectures on Jewish and Zionist topics, and was an ardent supporter of organizations dedicated to the teaching of Hebrew to Jewish children and adults.

Besides the Temple were several other Jewish places of worship. The major place of worship for Orthodox Jews was the Great Synagogue. On Saturday morning I went sometime with my grandfather to that synagogue It was an old, massive, stone building, much older than the Temple, located in the Jewish quarter of the city. With its thick, time-blackened walls, solid, wooden gate and small, narrow windows, it gave the impression of an old fortress. When one passed on Sabbath by the Great Synagogue, one could hear the murmur of prayer coming from inside the building packed to capacity. Then there was the *Chorshul* and several smaller Orthodox houses of worship *(shuls)* spread throughout the city. Some of the pious worshippers, with beards and corkscrew side locks, wore Chasidic garb: fur-trimmed hats (*shtreimels*), long black overcoats (*caftans*), black pants, white or black socks, and black shoes. The Orthodox women wore dark dresses, and had scarves wrapped around their heads. They never wore makeup. On Friday nights one could see the worshippers rushing towards the synagogues, with prayer book and *tallit* under their arm.

There were three days every year when every Jew, religious or secular, went to a synagogue. These were the two days of *Rosh Hashana,* the Jewish New Year, and *Yom Kippur,* the Day of Atonement. My parents also went to the synagogue on those holidays – and only on those holidays. It was the occasion when those assimilated, Germanized Jews like my father practiced a Jewish ritual. Mother used to call them "the three-day Jews."

From my grandfather I learned that the Day of Atonement is the holiest day of the year. Already in my early childhood the observance of that holiday left a deep impression on me. On the eve of the holiday the Jews of Czernowitz stopped their everyday activities. In a city where nearly half the population was Jewish, where many stores and shops were owned by Jews, the arrival of Yom Kippur eve brought the city nearly to a standstill. As evening approached, the hustling and bustling of this lively city ceased. The Jews locked their stores and shops, and rushed home to prepare for Yom Kippur. My parents and sister put on their finest cloths. Before getting dressed, Mother gave me a thorough washing from top to toes. Only afterwards could I wear my nice, navy-blue suit and black, lacquered shoes. Father lit memorial candles – in memory of his deceased parents mother told me in a subdued voice. Then the whole family sat down for the holiday dinner. Mother served dinner that was to suffice for the next twenty- four hours. After dinner we rushed to theTemple, Father holding his *tallit* and prayer book under his arm. We wanted to arrive on time to hear the *chazzan* intone *Kol Nidre*, the ancient prayer that opens the Yom Kippur evening.

Occasionally I spent *Yom Kippur* eve with my grandparents. In their home the ritual was more "Jewish" than in our home. Before starting the meal, Grandmother covered her head with a scarf and kindled the candles held by two silver candlesticks. She then covered her eyes with her hands and recited a blessing. Grandfather said another blessing (*kiddush*) over a cup of wine. Grandmother served dinner and after lighting the memorial candles we all went to the *shul* next door. My grandparents never went to the Temple where my parents went. In their view the service at the Temple was much too "modern," not a traditional service. At the *shul* there was a noisy gathering of chasidim with long beards and side locks, dressed in black caftans, buttoned–up white shirts without tie and white socks. Some of them wore *shtreimls* on their heads, while others wore black hats. Little boys with *yarmulkas* and sidelocks sat next to their fathers, fidgeting and moving restlessly in their seats. The women were in separated from the men and were sitting in the balcony. The Orthodox married women, who had their heads shaved and wore *sheitls*, had their heads covered with a modest dark scarf.

People who only a few hours earlier, dressed in their everyday clothes, were still haggling, quibbling, arguing, doing their last minute preparations for the holiday, were now in their houses of prayer wearing their holiday finery. Once the evening service started, the city fell silent, the streets almost deserted. For the worshippers gathered in synagogues, the solemnity and awe inspired by the holiest of the holidays felt like the

heavy atmosphere loaded with electricity before a thunderstorm. A hush settled over the congregation. Religious or secular, rich or poor, they all listened in awe to the age-old chanting of Kol Nidre by the *chazzan*, whose powerful voice seemed to rise to heaven. Even the little boys stopped fidgeting and listened to the chanting. At the end of the evening service, after Grandfather said *git yomtov and* shook hands with the people around him, we returned home. Other people also shook hands and wished each other the best before returning home. Grandfather told me that on *Yom Kippur* even people who had argued with each other during the year shake hands and make up with each other.

The next day, Yom Kippur, was a long, difficult day. It was a day of fasting and praying, a day of repentance. Since I didn't eat anything, the day appeared to me also very long. Part of the day I spent with my parents in Temple, and part in Grandfather's *shul*. In Grandfather's synagogue the pious worshipers, wrapped in their *kittels* and prayer shawls, prayed to the Almighty the whole day without interruption, as if summoned to the Last Judgement. Swaying back and forth in their shroud-like garments, they cried out loud to God, faces turned towards heaven, eyes shut as in trance, pleading and begging forgiveness, while beating their chests in repentance. With prayer shawls drawn over their heads, they raved, they murmured, they wailed, they sobbed, drowning out the *chazzan's* wailing voice. They drove themselves into frenzy. I watched with fascination how some of the *chasidim* threw themselves to the ground, touching the floor with their forehead while whispering a prayer with eyes closed. Then suddenly they jumped to their feet, their bodies wrapped in *tallithim* swaying again, while heart-felt pleas and lamentation came from their parched lips that no drop of water could touch. In the women's gallery the wailing and weeping was heartbreaking. It was a soul-baring, gut-wrenching worship. When I asked Grandfather why the people were wailing and crying, he told me that the people are praying that their sins be atoned and that their names be sealed in the book of life. Seeing the ecstasy and lamentation that surrounded me, I concluded that these people have committed many, many grave sins and had to prey very hard on *Yom Kippur* so that God will forgive them. Otherwise, what reason would they have to lament and cry out so loud to God? Since Grandfather was also deeply immersed in prayer, I decided not to share my thoughts with him. After the conclusion of the evening service, the physically and emotionally exhausted worshipers packed their *tallithim*, wished their family, friends and acquaintances the best, and returned home to break the fast. When we got home, Grandfather had first a shot of

*schnapps* with a slice of honey cake, while I had only a slice of cake. Afterwards we had an elaborate meal. Food had never tasted so good as it did after a day of fasting.

How different the service was at the Temple where my parents prayed! The observance of Yom Kippur by secular, modern Jews seemed a world apart from that in the Orthodox synagogue. Many of the modern, middle-class Jewish men wore top hats and black tailcoats, outfits similar to those worn by middle-class West-European Jews on this occasion. Those of lesser means wore a simple black felt hat and a dark suit. Most of them were clean-shaven, with some of them displaying a small mustache. The women wore their best dark dresses for this event, and their hair was covered with a scarf or hat. Wearing no *kittels* and only a small prayer shawl, these mostly middle-class, westernized worshipers prayed in a more restrained, more formal way. They kept their feelings under control. There were no outbursts of emotions, no dropping to the floor, no loud crying or wailing. Only in the women's gallery one could hear subdued crying. Cantor Gurmann, who was the Main Cantor at the Temple in the 1930s, wore a long *kittel*, and his head was covered by an imposing white miter. The cantor's powerful and melodious voice reverberated through the temple like that of an opera singer. His expressive lyrical chants stirred the emotions in some worshipers, while others admired the vocal splendor of the cantor's voice. A small chorus dressed in white, as well as an organ player accompanied the cantor. The ceremony was solemn and formal, not ecstatic; praying by this westernized congregation was subdued. After the concluding evening prayer, the congregates shook hands politely with each other, exchanged a few friendly words, and then rushed home to break fast. The long, hard day was over.

When the Jewish holiday of Sukkot arrived shortly after Yom Kippur, a *sukkah* was built next to Grandfather's *shul.* The *sukkah* was a flimsy booth with walls made of wooden boards and a roof of widely spaced slats covered with green tree branches. Inside the *sukkah* were a long wooden table and two benches. The *sukkah* meant to be a reminder of the hastily set-up shelters used by the ancient Israelites during their forty years of wandering in the wilderness. For seven days my grandparents ate their meals in the *sukkah.* When I visited, I loved to eat the evening meal together with my grandparents. After the meal, I sat in the *sukkah* by myself, and in the quiet of night I looked through the roof of green branches at the sparkling stars, wondering if there are any people out there in the distant universe.

The city's inhabitants formed a vivacious, colorful, sometimes cynical, often antagonistic mixture of diverse ethnic and religious groups. The different ethnic groups of the city had their own houses of culture and social gatherings. There was the Romanian *Casa Poporului*, the German *Deutsches Haus*, the Ukrainian *Narodni Dim*, and the Polish *Dom Polski*. The Jews met usually in the *Juedisches Nationalhaus* or in the *Toynbehalle*. The facades of some of these buildings were decorated with allegorical figures, such as strong, bare-breasted women holding a sword, a book, or wheat sheaves, symbols of strength, culture, and prosperity. In these houses of culture the members of different ethnic groups gathered in the evening or on holidays to socialize, to watch artistic performances, or to listen to speakers in their native tongue.

The people of Bukovina—both Gentiles and Jews—who had lived under Austrian rule for one-and-a half centuries and had been exposed to western culture, felt that they were more advanced, more sophisticated and more "civilized" than those from the Romanian Old Kingdom. Even the Romanian intellectuals who had grown up and been educated under the Austrians shared that opinion. The new Romanian rulers became aware of this attitude and naturally resented it. A gap developed between the two populations, a gap created by differences in history and cultures, which would not be bridged for decades. The local population, especially in urban areas, maintained the feelings of superiority towards the new rulers, although they did not display them in public. The latter, in turn, remained suspicious of the loyalty of their new subjects. During World War II, those suspicions proved to be disastrous for the Jewish population of Bukovina.

In later years I learned that until the mid 1930s, the different ethnic and religious groups that made up the population of this cosmopolitan city tried to hide their prejudices towards each other behind a façade of civility and propriety. But in fact many Romanians and Poles disliked the Germans, while the Ukrainians disliked the Poles. The Germans, in turn, felt superior to the Poles, disliked the Ukrainians, and felt contempt for the Romanians. Catholics did not care much about Protestants, and Protestants kept their distance from Catholics. Both Catholics and Protestants felt superior towards the Russian Orthodox. Of course, Catholics, Protestants, and Russian Orthodox, be they Poles, Ukrainians, Germans, Russians or Romanians, were not exactly fond of the Jews in their midst. This became visible especially when an Orthodox Jew, with long beard and side locks, wearing a black felt hat and black *caftan*, rushed to the synagogue or to his place of business. The catcalls and laughter of the less-restrained youngsters, the

derogatory smiles and disdainful glances of the more respectable adults, betrayed their true feelings towards this man. Still, until the rise of nationalist chauvinism and the spread of Nazi ideology, people with different ethnic or religious affiliations displayed usually courteous behavior towards each other and got along fairly well. Those better educated and more refined among them often hid their prejudices towards each other behind a façade of excessive friendliness and politeness.

Considering the not-too-friendly attitude of the city's non-Jewish population towards its Jewish neighbors, one would have expected that the Jewish community would be a cohesive block, fostered by the surrounding animosity. Nothing could be farther from the truth. The Jewish irrepressible love for argument led to noisy, heated disputes that occasionally resulted in conflicts within their own congregation. I remember Jews arguing with each other wherever they happened to meet—on the street, at the *shul*, in a café, at the *Kultusgemeinde,* at Jewish cultural events. They spoke with passion and gesticulated energetically to make their point. The Jewish community of Czernowitz was splintered into numerous factions, and each faction had its own divisions. The fissures were along social, political, cultural, linguistic, and religious lines. Following the Sholem Alechem saying that "two Jews have three opinions" on any subject, there were constant arguments among Jews regardless of the topic. There were Jewish communists, social democrats, Bundists (no relation to the German-American Bund), Zionists, liberals and conservatives. Each of these groups, in turn, was also splintered. There were communists of the Stalinist stripe and communists of the Trotzkyite stripe. There were left-wing Zionists, right-wing Zionists, and middle-of-the-road Zionists. When people belonging to different groups met, there were heated discussions among them. Communists argued with social democrats, Bundists with Zionists, liberals with conservatives, Stalinists with Trotzkyites, left-wing Zionists with right-wing Zionists. Of course, there was also antagonism between rich and poor. Along religious lines the Jews were divided into ultra-Orthodox, moderate-Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform Jews. Secular Jews usually displayed their Jewishness only on the High Holidays, when they showed up at the Temple. There were also Jewish agnostics and atheists. Culturally the Jews were divided into Yiddishists, Hebrewists, Germanists, and Esperantists. The latter were convinced that Esperanto, the artificial language created by the Polish Jew Zamenhof, would become the universal language of the world. Since every Jew considered himself an *oberchochem* (Yiddish slang for "supersmart") and believed that his opinion was the right one, there were heated

debates, discussions, and endless arguments, dampened occasionally by a cynical remark. The arguing and discussions, however, rarely took on a hostile character, and just contributed to a lively exchange of ideas and opinions. Only later, during the dark years of fascist oppression, were the debates of lofty ideas replaced by the immediate, down-to-earth preoccupation of daily survival. Persecution and hatred forced the Jews of Czernowitz to unite and stick together.

A large segment of the Jewish population lived in poverty. The *Kultusgemeinde* (Jewish Community Council) set up soup kitchens for those in need. Jewish- American charitable organizations, such as the American Joint Distribution Committee (AJDC), OSE and ORT, also assisted the poor with food, clothing and training. The city had a large number of Jewish beggars, who knew how to organize their activities. The beggars set themselves up into groups, and each group had its own section of the city where it was active. Most of the begging was done from Jewish storeowners. On a certain day of the week a beggar would appear in the store and collect alms. The same beggar always appeared on the same day of the week. On other days other beggars would show up to collect their alms. It was a well-organized enterprise. At my grandfather's stationary store a beggar would appear every day of the week to collect his alms. Grandfather gave each a coin or two. When one beggar happened to intrude into the territory of another one on the same day and the two met, one could hear an exchange of curses and obscenities that would have made a street sweeper blush. They cursed each other in Yiddish, and on such occasions I found out how rich and colorful the Yiddish language is.

One of the exciting events in my childhood was to accompany my mother to the open-air market on *Austriaplatz* (Austria Square). Monday and Thursday were market days. On those days Mother bought produce from the farmers, and I tagged along. In the wee hours, horse-drawn carts loaded with produce left the city's suburbs—Rosch, Kaliczanka, Klokuczka, Manastirisht--and brought the goods to the open-air market. Some of the German women-farmers from the suburb of Rosch, who lived closer to the city, walked from their home to the market, balancing skillfully the goods on their heads. The market was a motley, noisy mixture of farmers, housewives, street vendors, and domestic animals, intermingled with a variety of colorful characters such as Gypsies, beggars, loafers, music makers and pickpockets. The market also mirrored the hodgepodge of the city's ethnic makeup. One could hear a cacophony of German,

Romanian, Ukrainian, Polish, Russian, and Yiddish. The Romanian peasants, dressed in their colorful national costumes, were hawking chickens and eggs, while the Schwabian-German women, wearing their traditional "*Dirndl*," were offering fresh butter, cheese and vegetables. The Lipovans, dressed in Russian "*rubashkas,*" were selling fresh corn on the cob. Ukrainian laborers were haggling over worn pants with Jewish *handeles* (used cloth vendors), and cobblers were hammering away diligently at worn out boots, while their customers were waiting barefoot or in their socks. Gypsy girls, in colorful dresses, with flowery scarves over their raven-black, shiny hair, were reading the palm of illiterate peasants, predicting their future. Through the din one could hear the neighing of horses, the barking of dogs, the crowing of roosters. The whole market was enveloped in the odor of cheap tobacco, onion, garlic, tanned sheepskins, and horse droppings. There was a whiff of *rakiu*, a cheap alcoholic drink made from distilled prune juice, preferred by the peasants. Occasionally, a peasant who had too much of this stuff, started a fight with his neighbor. That provided temporary entertainment for the crowd that quickly formed a circle around the combatants. While the jostling crowd watched the brawl and cheered-on the fighters, the pickpockets in their midst were busy plying their trade. I was always eager to see the people fighting with each other, and tried to squeeze through the crowd to get a better view. But Mother held firmly my hand and pulled me away, in spite of my protest. Eventually, a policeman arrived and carried off the drunk, berating and cursing him. It was a colorful scene.

My parents loved me, but they showed it in their own fashion. Father tried to instill in me discipline, honesty, obedience, and to give me a good education. Mother told me fairy tales, recited poetry, baked delicious pastries, and sang beautiful songs. But I do not remember being kissed, embraced, or caressed by my parents. There was very little touching in our family, except for holding my hand during a walk, mostly for reasons of safety. Nor was there any verbal expression of affection. The tightly controlled feelings of affection, restrained by the strict upbringing by my father, in later years hampered my ability to express my feelings and emotions in open, outgoing ways. It took me years to overcome this impediment.

When I was six, my mother took me to a kindergarten run by the *Safa Ivriya*, an organization dedicated to the cultivation of the Hebrew language. The kindergarten was located on the first floor of the Jewish Community Center, in a room with white walls and

several wooden benches. There were pictures of King Carol II and of Theodor Herzl on the wall. The teacher was an elderly lady with glasses, and her gray hair was partly covered by a small black hat. She was obviously of the Orthodox persuasion. She and the children spoke German. There were about a dozen children who played together, listened to stories from the Bible, learned the Hebrew alphabet, and sang Hebrew songs. I recall one song I learned in those days:

Al chalon, al chalon
Hinei tzippor yaffah,
Yelled ratz al challon
Tzippor, tzippor affah.

(On the window, on the window
Sits a pretty bird,
The boy runs to the window
But the bird flies away)

If I was a difficult child at home, I was even more difficult in kindergarten. First I could not get used to be away from my mother and cried through most of the sessions. Naturally, that disrupted everybody's activity. Exasperated, the teacher sent me to an adjacent empty room, where I could cry as much as I pleased. Sometimes I spent a whole hour by myself in the empty room. It took awhile until I grew accustomed to the kindergarten, and only then did I stop crying. But even then, I did not make life easy for the teacher. I could not sit quietly while the teacher tried to teach us a song, or read us a story. As my mother would often say to me, I did not have *Sitzfleisch*, meaning I could not sit still in one place. I fidgeted with my colored pencils, tried to catch a fly buzzing around my head, or tried to take the colored pencils from the boy sitting next to me. This led to shoving and eventually one of us started to cry. Again, I was expelled to the empty room. Gradually, after several weeks of disrupting the class, I got finally used to the other children and the teacher, and started to enjoy the activities.

One of the happiest times in kindergarten was the celebration of Purim. It was a joyous festival, commemorating the salvation of the Jewish people from Haman, the wicked minister of King Ahasveros in ancient Persia. The teacher told us the story of Purim as described in the *Megillah*" (the biblical book of Esther): how Haman plotted the extermination of the Jewish people of Persia; how Mordechai discovered the plot in time,

and informed his niece, Queen Esther; how the Queen interceded with her husband the King for the life of her people; and how the King had eventually Haman hanged.

While the well to do Jewish families celebrated Purim with sumptuous meals, generous amounts of wine, and masquerade balls, we children celebrated in our own way. On Purim day, all the children came to kindergarten dressed in costumes, improvised from a variety of old clothes and objects. Some of the children wore masks. I was dressed as an American Indian, with feathers supplied by my mother as a head dressing. I wore an old white peasant shirt over my shoulders, held around my waist by one of my sister's colored belts. In my hand I held a homemade bow and arrow. On my face I had painted red lines with one of my crayons. The other boys were dressed like pirates, cowboys, Indians, and clowns. The girls were dressed as gypsies, ballerinas, angels and princesses. We all looked like characters from a fairy tale. Our teacher gave each of us a *grogger*, which according to tradition is used as a noisemaker to blot out the memory of Haman. It was a noisy, cheerful celebration. We sang the Hebrew songs we had learned in previous months, danced in a circle, and filled the room with the noise of rattling *groggers*. We quickly became boisterous. We laughed loudly, jumped up and down, pushed each other, and ran around the classroom grinding our rattlers. Our teacher tried in vain to contain our celebration. Through the din of rattling, laughing, jumping, and stomping, we could hear her: "Children, no jumping! Children, no running!" Eventually, we quieted down. During the lunch break I ate the traditional *hamantashen*, little triangular pastries filled with poppy seeds. Mother had made them especially for this holiday and put them in my lunch box. At the end of class, we were a bunch of happy, tired children. It was a day of great fun.

I had a curious mind early in my childhood. Continuously I asked questions of my parents, sister, and kindergarten teacher, until I drove them to despair. I wanted to know why the grass is green and the sky is blue; why the leaves on oak and beech trees turn yellow-reddish in the fall and drop to the ground, while the pine trees keep their needles green year round. I wanted to know why dogs can swim and cats cannot; why my sheep-wool sweater when left in the rain shrinks, but a sheep standing in the rain doesn't shrink; why my buttered slice of bread always drops to the floor buttered-side down. I wanted to know why I have two nipples on my chest and what they are for. Are they for decoration? After watching a Jewish wedding celebrated by the rabbi in my Grandfather's courtyard, I asked my mother why everybody was happy and

congratulated the *chossen* when he deliberately stomped on a glass and broke it, whereas when I broke a glass unintentionally I got a slap on my behind. When my father took me to the communal steam bath for the first time and I saw many naked men, young and old, I wanted to know why old men get wrinkles on their faces, but not on their behinds. My sister told me that I asked too many *klotzkashes* (Czernowitz-Yiddish for "dumb questions") and that I was driving people nuts. Perhaps it was my curious nature that made me choose in later years the career of a scientist.

Before becoming a scientist, however, many tumultuous events still awaited me down the road.

After one year in kindergarten, my parents sent me to a public elementary school. It was the first time that I came in contact with a teacher and children who spoke Romanian, a language I could not understand. The school was attached to a Pedagogical Institute that trained girls to become schoolteachers. There were about twenty children in my class, three or four of them Jewish. The Jewish children sat in the back of the classroom. Eighteen and nineteen year old girls from the Pedagogic Institute, who attended our teacher's lessons, usually took up the last row of benches. The children had to wear in class a smock made of black chiffon, with starched, white collar and red bow tie. This was our school uniform.

The first few weeks in school I was not very happy, to put it mildly. I could not understand what the teacher or the children were saying, and why the children were poking fun of me. At the end of the first day of school, when I walked out from the building and saw my mother, I ran towards her and started to cry. I told her that I didn't understand anything that was being said in school, that the other children were making fun of me, and that I didn't want to go back to school. Mother tried to console me. In a soothing voice she said: "The first day of school is already over. Just another nine months and you will have vacation." I didn't know exactly what nine months meant, but mother's soft voice and the word "vacation" calmed me down and I stopped crying.

The teacher, Miss Constantza, was a young Romanian women, who did not speak any German. She was not able to help me, and decided that the best method of teaching me the language was to ignore me and to let me struggle on my own. At home, my sister, who was older and also had to struggle to learn Romanian, tried to help me. After several weeks, I began to understand certain words, then whole sentences, and, after a few months, I was finally able to understand what the teacher and the children were saying. However, it took me more than a year to speak the language, albeit far from perfect.

At the end of my first school year, the teacher decided to put us children and our knowledge on display. It was the final examination day, and the teacher invited the parents and other family members to attend. The children were dressed in their black smocks, with starched white collars, and bright red bow ties. We were sitting in our classroom benches, backs straight, and hands behind the back. The parents were sitting on chairs placed along the white walls. It was a festive atmosphere. The room was decorated with Romanian tricolor flags and with drawings made by the children with colored pencils throughout the year. On the wall above the blackboard hung the picture

of King Carol II in military uniform. The teacher was eager to show what the children had learned in school, while the parents were prepared to take pride in their children's knowledge. We started out singing the Romanian anthem that began with *Traiasca Regele* (Long live the king...), then sang several songs we had learned during the year, and finally each of us had to answer individually the teacher's questions. Many of the questions dealt with identifying animals or different objects from pictures, and describing them. We also had to identify the letters of the alphabet, and write simple numbers. When my turn came, the teacher said: "Tell me, Scherzer, what covers the body of a dog?" I knew that the correct answer in German is *Haar* (hair), but I did not know the corresponding word in Romanian. So I answered using a related word: "feathers, Miss Teacher." Needless to say that my answer caused considerable amusement among the adults gathered in the room. The teacher was not amused, and neither was my mother. Realizing that I had made a blunder, I blushed and dropped my head. I wished I could fall through the floor. I felt deeply ashamed and embarrassed. After all these years, I still remember the scene in the classroom and my embarrassment. Even today, when I look at a dog, I sometimes think what he would look like if he would be covered with feathers instead of hair.

Elementary school was not much fun for me. The teacher was strict, and the penalties for disobedience severe. Not paying attention in class, talking during the lecture, not doing the homework, were all penalized. The penalty usually consisted in having to stand in a corner of the classroom until recess, facing the wall. Troublemakers were expelled from the classroom. A repeat offence was penalized more severely: standing on the knees in the corner of the classroom, facing the wall. If these penalties did not help, the teacher used some other means: a lash with a belt or a wooden ruler on the outstretched hand, or standing on the knees in a corner on top of hard corn kernels—a very painful experience.

The worst, however, came for me after class. While most children could barely wait for the bell to ring, announcing the end of class, I dreaded that moment. During those intermissions, the Romanian, Ukrainian, and German children organized "games" that gave them much pleasure but frightened me. One of the games they liked to play was called "War between Christians and Jews." The outcome of that game was predictable. The few Jewish children were thoroughly beaten and left with marks on their bodies. In another game, of the "cop-and-robber" type, the Jewish children always had to

play the role of robbers. In this game, the "cops" always captured the "robbers" and beat them up. Such "games" were also played at the end of the school day, on the street in front of the school. When I walked out from the school building, the bullies were already waiting for me like a pack of hungry dogs, looking for a treat. It did not help that the bullies were taller and stronger than I was. It was also in the first grade that I found out that in addition to my real name, I had another name: *jidan* (kike). As time went by, I heard that name more and more often, sometimes with variations such as *pui de jidan* (kike brat) or *jidanash* (little kike).

For the first time I became aware that I was different from other children. In kindergarten I had been grouped together with Jewish children that behaved and were treated by the teacher the same way as I was. Now the non-Jewish children in school made me rudely aware that I am a Jew, that I am somehow inferior. I realized that without any other reason, the sole fact that I was a Jew gave others a license to harass, mock, or beat me up, to spit in my face and call me names. It was my first encounter with blind hatred and prejudice. I suddenly felt like an outcast among the other children, as if I had some terrible, shameful disease that made me the target of their contempt and animosity. At night, alone in my bed in the darkness, I often cried. It was so unfair! Why did they bully and beat me? Why so much hostility from children that I barely knew and have never hurt?

There was one kid, Johan, who tried to protect me from the bullies. He was German, and sometimes he spoke German to me. Maybe the reason he tried to protect me was the fact that we had the same native tongue. He was not strong, but swift and agile. When things got hot, he managed to interpose himself between the bullies and me, and tried to separate us. But he did not always succeed. There were too many of them.

At the beginning I did not say anything at home about the "games" played at school. I did not want to be perceived as a coward. But one day, something happened to me that I could not hide from my parents. It was the end of class, and I was running down the hallway to escape from a bully who was trying to catch me. He was taller and stronger than I was, and I knew that if he caught me he would hurt me. When he got close, he tripped me. I fell, hitting the stone floor with my face. I felt a sharp pain, and my nose and lower lip started to bleed profusely. I had hurt my nose bone and my teeth had cut into my lower lip. I started crying in pain, while blood was dripping on the white collar of my uniform. Satisfied with his accomplishment, the bully laughed and walked away. I

came home in tears, and told my mother what happened. Seeing my bloody face and clothes, mother became very upset. She tried to comfort me, and promised that from now on she would pick me up from school every day. She also promised to talk to the teacher. Indeed, after Mother talked to the teacher, the "games" stopped during the intermission. But the harassment did not stop. The pushing, the stepping on my toes "by mistake," the spilling of ink from my inkwell on my schoolbooks, the name calling, continued. Sometimes I pushed back or punched the most aggressive bully, but I always ended up a loser. At the end of the school day, I always walked out from the school building with trepidation, never knowing what to expect. When I saw my mother who was waiting for me, I ran towards her and embraced her. Anxiety turned into happiness. How good it felt to walk home, my hand in Mother's hand, feeling her protective presence!

While in elementary school, I had to cope not only with harassment from the school bullies, but also with the disparaging remarks made by the students from the Pedagogical Institute. While sitting on my backbench, I was close to these students who sat in the last row of benches during class. Although they knew my name, they always called me "Moishe" or "Itzik", typical Jewish names that had a ring of derision in those days. When they used those names, they were always laughing, as if they had said something very funny. I could not understand why the names of Romanian children, such as Gheorghe or Nicolai, were not funny, but Moishe or Itzik were funny. They also mocked my German accent, and thoroughly enjoyed seeing me embarrassed and close to tears. On those occasions I discovered that not only children, but also some grownup people showed contempt and hostility towards me, for reasons that I could not understand. I was bewildered and frightened.

In school I had a single friend, Josy. He was skinny, pale and very quiet. He also was Jewish, and was harassed the same way I was. During recess we stayed together, feeling safer this way. But the friendship did not last. After the first year of school, his parents discovered that he had tuberculosis, and decided to keep him home. He did not return. After that, I felt very lonely in school.

The continuing harassment and mocking took its toll. I became withdrawn, trying to put up an invisible wall between the hostile world and myself. I felt safe only at home, although even at home I had to "behave properly". That insular condition generated in me a feeling of alienation and isolation. I became dispirited and turned inward, attempting to shut out the poisonous hostility that surrounded me. I became extremely

shy. I did not play with other children and, after Josy's departure, did not make any friends in school. Without friends I became something of a loner. I played by myself and withdrew more and more into my inner world. Even in later years, when I met young people who were not hostile towards me, I had difficulties establishing bonds of friendship. During my adolescence I found escape in my books, in music, and in the beauty of nature. The dreary experience in my early childhood had left an indelible mark on my mind and soul.

The daily torment at school followed me into my sleep. Harrowing nightmares began to torment me. More and more often did I wake up screaming in the middle of the night, wrapped in cold sweat. The screams awakened my mother, who came running to my bed and tried to calm me with soothing words. Still, I was afraid to go back to sleep, afraid of some other horrible dream. The nightmares that started in grade school tormented me for many years into my adolescence.

After school, in addition to doing my homework, I had to sit down with my father three times a week and take lessons in German spelling and grammar. I found out quickly that learning German grammar was no easy task. I had to memorize the gender of each noun in order to use the appropriate definite article. While in English all nouns use the same definite article regardless of gender, in German there are three definite articles—der, die, das—corresponding to nouns of masculine, feminine, and neuter gender, respectively. But there is not always a logical correlation. I could not understand why one says *das Weib* (the woman) or *das Maedchen* (the girl) using the neuter article, but one says *die Bank* (the bench) or *die Wand* (the wall) using the feminine article. "Is a bench or wall more feminine than a woman or girl?" I asked my father. "It doesn't make sense, but that's the way the German language is," he replied. "Just try to memorize it." I concluded that German grammar is not always rational. Years later I found out that most of the German people would act in ways that the civilized world considered anything but rational. After all, can you expect rational behavior from a people that use the neuter article for the word "woman" and the feminine article for "wall?"

The interminable length of convoluted German sentences, with subject at the beginning and predicate far away near the end, made their comprehension not too easy. But the verbs were for me the most difficult part of German grammar. To learn the conjugation of verbs was no simple matter, since there is a huge number of irregular

verbs, each having its own form of conjugation. There were no rules for these verbs, no patterns, and I had to remember the conjugation of each of them. Not an easy job for a nine year old little boy! I also had to memorize lists of prepositions and know which ones require the genitive, dative, or accusative case. In addition, I had to struggle with the Gothic alphabet that my father taught me, to enable me to read and write German with that alphabet. My father was impatient and would not tolerate a wrong answer. An error in the conjugation of some irregular verb, or the wrong case used with a preposition, resulted in a sharp admonition. I found out quickly that I had to be well prepared for each lesson. Those lessons were not much fun at the time, but later I began to appreciate the effort made by my father to teach me German. Due to his effort I was able to read and write in that language, and to acquaint myself with German literature and philosophy. In later years, when I started learning English grammar, I was surprised how much simpler it was compared to German grammar.

My father also taught me a number of German and Latin proverbs. He sprinkled his conversations with these proverbs, in order to emphasize a point. He frequently used the German proverbs *Schmiede das Eisen solange es glueht* (Work the iron as long as it is hot), and *Zu einem groben Klotz gehoert ein grober Keil* (To crack a tough wood block you need a tough wedge). The English equivalent of the latter one is "Fight fire with fire." This proverb Father often used in later years, when the discussion turned to Hitler and to Nazi Germany. Father's favored proverbs were in Latin. *Summum jus, summum injuria* (Extreme justice is extreme injustice) he used to say when a judge handed down a sentence that my father considered too harsh. *Ubi bene, ibi patria* (Where I feel good, that's where my fatherland is), *Quot licet Jovi, non licet bovi* (What Jupiter may do an ox may not do) and *Homo homini lupus est* (Men are like wolves to each other) are proverbs that my father used frequently. The last proverb he often used during the war years.

When I was nine years old, I had an experience that, although it may seem trivial, left a deep impression in my mind. It was a warm late-summer day when Mother decided to take me along for a walk to Kaliceanka, one of the city's suburbs. Mother knew a peasant who had a small vegetable garden, where he planted tomatoes, cucumbers, and radishes. He also had several apple, pear, and plum trees. She wanted to buy fresh fruits and vegetables for the weekend. When we arrived at the peasant's house, Mother walked inside, while I stayed in the garden. I walked around among the plants and trees,

admiring the large tomatoes and ripe, reddish-gold apple. Suddenly I heard loud squealing coming from the neighboring yard. Curious, I approached the wooden fence, and peeked between the weather-beaten planks into the adjoining yard. The scene I saw is still etched in my memory. A peasant, sweating profusely, was struggling with a squirming, squealing pig, trying to hold him down on the ground. Another peasant, holding a long knife, was stabbing the pig repeatedly in his underbelly, trying to find the heart with his knife under the thick layer of fat. The sharp squeal of the pig in agony filled the air. It was a sound of harrowing suffering, of terror, of excruciating pain. When the peasant's knife finally found the heart, the sharp squeal turned into a gurgling sound that became weaker and weaker until it stopped. The pig was now motionless, while blood was dripping out from the stab wounds and from his snout. I was transfixed and at the same time sickened by what I saw. I felt a knot in my stomach, but could not take my eyes off that scene. The two peasants dragged the slaughtered animal by his hind legs under a raised wooden beam, leaving a trail of blood behind in the dirt. They tied the pig's hind legs with a thick rope, threw one end of the rope over the overhead beam, and pulled at the rope until the pig was suspended in the air, its belly facing me. They tied the rope's end to one of the two supporting beams, and went to work on the slowly swaying carcass. With one move of his sharp knife one of the peasants slit open the pig's underbelly, from front legs to hind legs. A stream of blood gushed out from the open belly, filling rapidly the empty bucket the peasant shoved hurriedly underneath. The gushing blood splattered also on the peasants, leaving large, red-brown blotches on their white linen shirts. Their knife and hands were covered with blood. When they opened the carcass and started cutting out the blood-dripping heart, liver, and other organs from the pig's interior, my stomach could not take it anymore. I turned just in time to throw up in the garden on a yellow-green cucumber. I then ran to my mother and asked her to take me home quickly. I was shaking and had a sick feeling in the pit of my stomach. Mother thought that I had fallen ill, until I told her what I had just witnessed. Never did I go back to that house. Even now I can still hear the sharp, desperate squeal of the pig in agony. I think that what I witnessed on that late-summer day is the reason why I avoid eating pork even as an adult. Religious considerations play only a secondary role.

During my early childhood, I often fell sick in the rainy season or during the winter. I was a scrawny, skinny, little boy, with ribs clearly visible through my pale,

transparent skin. I was engaged in a constant struggle with my large tonsils (still have them), which became easily inflamed in the cold weather. My throat hurt, I had difficulties swallowing, and ran a fever. Mother promptly decided that I stay in bed, drink warm milk with honey, or hot tea with lemon. Hot chicken soup, of course, was part of the treatment. When my tonsils were seriously inflamed, Mother applied an additional treatment: she heated some dry cornmeal on the stove, poured it on a scarf, made a roll of it, and wrapped it around my neck. The hot commeal was supposed to heal my tonsils faster. When the fever persisted, Mother called Dr. Noe. He came with his small, brown suitcase of medicine and instruments, checked me out with his stethoscope, had me say "aaah," and prescribed some bad-tasting medicine. "If I swallow the medicine does it know where to go and what to do?" I wanted to know. "Sure it does," comforted me the smiling doctor, "it goes to work immediately and takes away the pain." "It never goes the wrong way?" I asked, hoping somehow to avoid taking those bitter pills. "No, it doesn't," replied the doctor soothingly. With reluctance, I swallowed the bitter medicine.

Being sick had also some advantages. First of all, I did not have to go to school. When I stayed home, I did not have to hear the taunting from my classmates, and did not have to fear the bullies. Nor did I have to do any homework. Being sick also carried the advantage of being coddled by everybody in the family. Mother, always concerned, was fussing around me, arranging the pillows, tucking me in under the blanket, checking my temperature, and asking repeatedly if I want something to eat or drink. Father, who was usually preoccupied and distant, sat in the evening by my bed, and told me some of the stories he knew best: stories from ancient Greek and Roman mythology. He told me about the war between the ancient Greeks and the Trojans, how the Greek warriors sneaked into Troy in the belly of a wooden horse in order to conquer the city. "Why did the Greeks go to war against Troy?" I wanted to know. "Because of a pretty women," replied my father. "Her name was Helen. She was a Greek woman that was abducted by a Trojan shepherd named Paris. The Greeks wanted her back and went to war against Troy to get her." "Do people always go to war because of pretty women?" I asked. "Not anymore," replied my father with a rare smile on his face. "They did this in ancient times. Not only the Greeks, but the ancient Romans also fought for their women. When their neighbors, the Sabines, abducted a large number of Roman women and married them, the Romans went to war against the Sabines. Nowadays, however, people are more likely to fight for their women with their fists or with their knives." I didn't quite understand why people would fight with their fists or knives for a woman, but upon

further inquiring Father told me not to ask so many questions and better listen to his stories. Father then told me the story of Ulysses' odyssey on his return to Greece, of his encounter with the giant, one-eyed Cyclopes, of the sorceress Circe that turned Ulysses' men into swine, of his faithful wife Penelope and the punishment of her suitors by Ulysses. I found those stories fascinating, and forgot temporarily my illness.

My sister was also kind to me. She brought me picture books from the library, where she went frequently to get books for herself and for my parents. When Aunt Cilli came to visit, she brought me a toy, or, more important, an orange. Oranges were rare and expensive in those days, and receiving an orange was a rare treat. While I delighted myself with slices of orange, Mother took the peels, sprinkled them with sugar, and let them dry. These dried, sweet orange peels were another delicious treat.

When the doctor came to see me, I did my best to look as sick as possible, even when I felt already better. After checking my temperature and looking into my throat, he readily realized what I was doing. He smiled at me and patted me on the head. Although the fever was gone and my tonsils had recovered, the doctor told my mother that I should stay home a few more days. I think he said this to make me happy.

Sometimes my sister took me to the movies. They were mostly French or German movies, but occasionally English or American movies were also shown. They usually played at the cinema *Scala* or *Savoy*. All movies were shown with Romanian subtitles. I still remember watching the movie *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* and crying. "Why were people so cruel to the poor hunchback Quasimodo?" I asked my sister. "Because there are bad people in the world, who make good people suffer," she replied philosophically. "Are they like the bullies in school?" I wanted to know. "Yes," she said. Then I understood. To stop me from crying, she told me that Quasimodo in the movie actually was not a real hunchback, but a normal-looking man named Charles Laughton, who only pretended to be a hunchback. Laughton is an actor, she said, and he was only acting in the role of Quasimodo. I became fascinated with that kind of acting. I think the movie planted in me a seed, which in later years developed into a keen interest in acting.

Also in town was the cinema *Roxy*, where only cowboy and cop-and-robber movies were shown. Mostly working class youngsters went to see those movies. Middle-class people were too snobbish, and ignored them. Neither my parents nor my sister took me to any of those movies. "They are not for you," I was told. "Why?" I wanted to know. "Because there is a lot of shooting and killing in those movies" was the reply. Case closed. There was no point to argue. I could not change my parents' mind, and

surely could not convince my opinionated sister to change hers. I could never win. From my classmates I knew that in cowboy movies there was shooting by people that wore wide-brimmed hats, carried revolvers and rode fast horses. I would have liked to see such a movie, but I never saw one in my childhood. During my teenage years, the political system changed. The new rulers were fascists or communists, and none of them allowed the showing of cowboy movies. The first time I saw such a movie was in America, at the age of 35.

Occasionally, my mother took me to the Yiddish theatre. She liked to attend performances given by well-known visiting theatre ensembles from different parts of Europe. I did not understand much of what was happening on stage, but I liked to watch. At one of these performances, there was a scene in which the main character fell dead on stage. At that scene, the ladies in the audience discretely wiped tears from their eyes. Not knowing what was going on, I thought it was quite funny the way the actor fell to the floor, and burst into laughter. From the way people looked at me I quickly realized that I shouldn't have laughed. Mother looked at me disapprovingly, and apologized to the people sitting next to us for my awkward behavior. That was the last time my mother took me to the Yiddish theatre. Years later, under the Soviets, I went regularly to the Yiddish theatre on my own, newer missing a performance.

One place I looked forward to visit was my grandparent's house. They lived in a ground floor, two-bedroom apartment, facing a paved courtyard bordered by shrubs. The bedrooms were small and the kitchen was semi-dark. The light came into the kitchen through the panes of a window that separated the kitchen from a small hallway. The hallway also had a window facing the courtyard. There was a windowless toilet. When the toilet smelled, so did the hallway. Every Saturday night, after dinner, while Father met with his friends at Druckmann's restaurant and my sister got together with her girlfriends, Mother took me to her parents. Her sisters and Uncle Joseph were also there. In the summer we sat on the porch, while in winter the family sat around the stove in the kitchen. Grandmother spread sunflower seeds on the cast iron plate of the stove to let them roast until they turned brownish. Then everybody ate some of the roasted seeds, while discussing the latest events in the family and in the world. The roasted seeds were delicious. On those occasions I used to play with my cousin Gusta, Aunt Jetty's little girl. Gusta was three years younger than I was. I still remember her black locks, her dark, sparkling eyes, and the crystalline, carefree laughter. We got along very well and looked forward to playing together.

When I came to my grandparents and Gusta wasn't there, I usually went into the courtyard to play with my small ball. In the same courtyard was a small, Orthodox *shul* where my grandfather used to pray every day of the year. On Sabbath, Grandfather went to *shul* for services in the morning and prayed there until noon. He than came home, washed his hands, and sat down for his *Shabbes* (Yiddish for Sabbath) meal at the table covered with a fresh, white cloth. After he said the *kiddush* blessing over a cup of wine, Grandmother served him *cholent*, a dish of meat, potatoes and beans. Since cooking on the Sabbath was forbidden by Jewish tradition, Grandmother prepared the *cholent* on Friday and kept it in the warm oven until noon the next day. The *cholent* was followed by fruit compote, usually made of prunes or cherries. The meal was always concluded with a glass of tea and a slice of honey cake. In those days it was common to drink tea from a glass and not a cup.

Next to the *shul* was a small apartment, where the Saddaghere rabbi and his wife the rabbetzin lived. Originally his family came from a small village with the same name, not far from Czernowitz. He wore a *shtreimle* and a long, black caftan. I remember him having a long graybeard, side locks, bushy eyebrows and dark eyes partially covered by heavy eyelids. The people surrounding him called him respectfully *the Rebbe*. There was always a crowd of people inside and outside his apartment. People who came with petitions asking help for a dying mother or a sick child, people who asked for advice when threatened by authorities, people who had barren wives and wanted a son, and people for whom a business deal went sour and who blamed one another. Then were the people who just liked to mill around among the other people. The latter Grandfather called *leidiggehers*, a Yiddish word for those who have nothing to do. The Rebbe helped and mediated, provided guidance and settled disputes. Regardless how difficult the case was, he always tried to help with a word of wisdom, a word of advice, or a word of consolation. His followers considered him a wise and knowledgeable man.

In the crowd was usually also a nitwit, named Feivl. He lived from the meals the rabbitzin served him daily in her kitchen, and his not-so-dumb remarks amused the crowd. Once I assisted with a small incident between Feivl and the rabbi. It happened after the rabbetzin had given Feivl his meal, and he demanded more food. The Rebbe, who happened to be present, didn't like the tone of Feivl's request, and he showed him the door. Feivl slouched out through the door, but then turned around and said, in Yiddish: *Veil mir zeinen narronim, kent ihr zein rabbonnim!* (Only because we are dumb

can you be our rabbi!). People who heard the remark were amused, and said to each other that after all Feivl was not as dumb as he appeared to be. The next day, forced by an empty stomach, Feivl became friends again with the Rebbe and the rabbetzin.

Only the people milling around in my grandfather's courtyard knew Feivl. There was, however, another queer character, known by everybody as the town fool. It was Bubby the Red, a name given to him because of his wild, red hair. Everybody knew him. He walked the streets in a torn-up overcoat, tattered pants, without a shirt, and barefoot. On his head he wore a crushed, black bowler hat, that a compassionate soul had given him to cover his wild hair. Still, his red, curly hair hung in tangles over his gentle, childish eyes, shining with unjustified cheerfulness. He had the mind of a child, and was always laughing. Even when children threw pebbles at him or pulled at his rags he kept laughing. He was a fixture of the city. Everybody poked fun at him, but at the same time people liked him. When he was hungry, he went to the basement of the Jewish Community Center, where he got a bowl of soup and a slice of bread. When the war broke out in 1941, he was one of the firsts to be shot by the Germans.

We had an assortment of neighbors in the Chamber of Commerce building, where we lived on the fourth floor until 1938. On the third floor lived the Kolnik family. Mr. Kolnik was an oil painter, who was struggling to make a living. Some of the paintings that he made and did not like he rolled up and stored them in the attic. When Mother went to the attic to hang freshly washed linen to dry, usually I tagged along. While Mother was hanging the linen on a clothesline, I enjoyed myself by unrolling Mr. Kolnik's paintings, shaking off the dust, and staring at the animals and human heads on the canvases. Many years later I realized that some of these paintings were similar to those used by Mr. Kolnik to illustrate the collection of Yiddish fables by Eliezer Steinbarg. After the war, Mr. Kolnik went to Paris, where he became well known for his modern paintings. I wish I had the paintings he left in the attic!

On the second floor of our building lived judge Popescu, an elderly bachelor known for his sharp mind and his rectitude on the bench. He was always serious, distant, and highly respected by everybody who knew him. He belonged to the city's Romanian elite. When the Soviets occupied the city in 1940, he was promptly arrested. Later, he was exchanged for a high-level Communist from a Romanian jail. On the first floor of our building were the offices of the Chamber of Commerce, whose functionaries had rarely any contact with the residents of the building. On the ground floor was the elegant café

"Astoria," with its large chandeliers, wide windows, and shiny parquet floor, where waiters in white jackets and black pants served coffee and Viennese pastry.

Of all the tenants in our building, our immediate neighbors were the most colorful people. Next to us, on the fourth floor, lived Mr. Kaniuk with his wife and dog. He was a low-level clerk in a small, private office. He had been a member of the old Habsburg "Hoch- und Deutschmeister" regiment, had fought in World War I, and loved to sing his favored Austrian military march, that started with

*Ich bin von K und K*
*Infantrie Regiment..*

("I belong to the imperial and royal infantry regiment.."; "K und K" stands for *Kaiserlich und Koeniglich*)

He was Ukrainian, while his wife was Polish. They had a German shepherd, Wolfi, whom he loved and she hated. He would let the dog eat from his dish and sleep in his bed, while she would not even touch the dog. Mrs. Kaniuk often said to my mother: "Mrs. Scherzer, if someday I divorce my husband, you should know it's because of the dog." When Mr. Kaniuk came home drunk, which happened quite often, his wife became angry and started calling him all kinds of names. He got even by beating the living daylight out of her. All the neighbors knew what was going on, because the whole building reverberated with her screams. Between screams, we could hear her calling him Ukrainian swine, while he in turn called her Polish whore. Things quieted down only after both were exhausted from the beating and screaming. In 1940, during the Soviet occupation, they were able to leave for Germany. Not being able to take the dog with them, Mr. Kaniuk went with Wolfi to the Tzetzina woods, shot the dog with his hunting rifle, and buried him in the woods. Years later Mother found out from a cousin of Mrs. Kaniuk that Mr. Kaniuk had been drafted into the German army, sent to the Eastern front, and never returned. His wife was sent to a German factory, and apparently died during an Allied bombing raid.

In 1938, the Chamber of Commerce decided to evict its Jewish tenants. We moved into a two-bedroom apartment on the Postgasse (strada Bucurestilor in Romanian), on the second floor of a three-story building. The owner was Dr. Simche, an attorney, who lived across from us on the same floor. The doorman, Nicolai, a tall Ukrainian with a big, black mustache and dark, wild eyes, guarded the entrance to the building. The main entrance was from a courtyard that was also a passageway connecting two streets: the Postgasse and the Bahnhofstrasse. Down the street was the Post Office, which in those days also housed the city's telephone and telegraph center.

Across the street from our building was the Stock Exchange. There were always people milling around that building: traders, speculators, and moneychangers. In 1938, after the government prohibited private trading in foreign currencies, there were frequent police raids on our street. The police cordoned off the street, and searched the people milling around in front of the Stock Exchange. Anybody found carrying foreign currencies was arrested and the currency confiscated. Those arrested had to pay a heavy fine before being set free. A significant bribe to the chief of police could also do the trick.

When the soles on my shoes were worn out, my mother took them to a cobbler who lived in the Jewish quarter. Although there was never a Jewish ghetto in the city (until 1941), there was a Jewish quarter. It was located in the northern part of the city, not far from the Prut valley. Its main street was the *Judengasse*. It was one of the poorest sections of the city, with old, neglected one- or two-story buildings, squalid backyards, foul-smelling alleys, and noisy, bedraggled children playing next to stinking trashcans. That 's where poor Jewish tailors, cobblers, tinsmiths, old-clothes traders and junk dealers lived and worked. Some of them had their shops at street level, while others lived and worked in dark basements. In the summer, a reeking odor pervaded the whole area. The small, dark shops were filled with all sorts of things: a jumble of used household goods, worn hats and shoes, and old clothes of all sizes and colors. A lot of decrepit and unusable stuff could be found there, waiting for a buyer who could still make use of some of that junk. Then there were the street peddlers, hawking their wares from flimsy stands: old books and magazines, buttons and threads of different colors, handkerchiefs, brushes, shoemaker's wax, and matches. Little boys in threadbare short pants and torn shirts were hawking Yiddish newspapers, shouting the latest headlines. On warm days one could see the junk dealers and old-clothes traders standing in front of their shops, talking in Yiddish, gesticulating energetically with their hands, and shouting across the street to one another. During the week the streets were crowded with people. Throngs of shabbily dressed buyers, *leidiggaiers* (Yiddish for people without occupation), beggars, and urchins jostled each other. Some were looking for bargains, others were browsing, while still others were hustling or begging. From the tailor's airless tenement one could hear the rattling sewing machine, from the tinsmith's shop the hammering of brass, from the cobbler's semi-dark cellar room the pounding of nails into shoe soles. Only on Saturday, the holy day of rest for these harried people, did the Jewish quarter quiet down. The Jewish hospital, old-age home, and orphanage were also located in this

area. In front of the old-age home one could see white-bearded men with pale, weathered faces, some of them leaning on a cane, standing or sitting on a wooden bench near the house entrance, hunched forward and gazing into space or at passersby. Well-to-do Jews lived in the more prosperous areas of the city, next to the middle-class Christian population.

I outgrew my clothes quickly, and Mother had to buy fabric periodically for a new suit. We went then to the tailor to have the suit made. In those days, ready-made suits were expensive and only the rich could afford them. Most people had their clothing made by a tailor. My visit to the tailor's shop was my first encounter with true poverty, and left a lasting impression on me. The tailor and his family lived in abject poverty in the Jewish quarter of the city. He had only one room in the basement of a dilapidated building, where he worked and lived with his wife and four children. To reach the room, we had to walk through a dark passageway, pass a smelly lavatory used by several families that lived in the building and descend into the darkness down a flight of steps to reach the basement. The room where the tailor lived and worked was semidark, even in daytime. It had two small windows close to the ceiling at the level of the sidewalk. Occasionally, a few sunrays entered the darkened room through the small, dirty windows. The floor was partially covered with a few cracked, worn out, wooden boards, that showed some traces of brown paint near the walls. The rest of the floor was bare soil. The bare walls were glistering in the dim light from the water that was seeping through in small blobs, and running in tiny rivulets to the floor. A single, unshielded bulb hang in the middle of the ceiling. The air was damp and stifling, and there was a whiff of urine from the lavatory next door.

The tailor's workshop was in one corner of the room. There was a rickety wooden table and stool next to an old Singer sawing machine. In another corner stood an iron stove, on which the tailor's wife cooked the meals and boiled some water. In the other two corners of the room stood two beds, one for the tailor and his wife, and the other one for the four children. In the middle of the room stood an old wooden table, flanked by two benches. There was one wooden chair in the room, reserved for the visiting client.

The tailor, dressed in old trousers and wearing a dirty, gray shirt, was a feeble, skinny man with a gaunt face and eyes reddened by the strain of sewing in half-darkness. His wife, disheveled, with a sullen face, barely talked to us, and kept busy with her boiling pots. The kids, ranging in age from two to seven, were unkempt, barefoot, and had dirty hands and feet. The younger ones had snot running from their nose. The

youngest one was crying, because the rag that served as a diaper was wet and dirty. In the winter the children spent most of the time in bed under a goose-down comforter, the warmest place in the room.

When the tailor took my measurements he tried to smile at me. His bloodless lips were twisted into a painful, miserable smile, the smile of a man who was not used to smile. Whenever we went to the tailor, Mother took some candy in her handbag and gave it to the children. It was a rare treat for them, and their happy faces showed it.

At the age of nine I made my first trip to a foreign country. My grandfather had relatives in Zaleshchiki, Poland, and I went with my mother to visit them. Zaleshchiki was very close to the Romanian border, across the river Dniester. Czernowitz was a mere thirty miles from Zaleshchiki. We traveled by train--another first for me. It took about thirty minutes to reach the border. There, near the bridge across the Dniester, we spent an hour for passport and customs control. The Romanian customs inspection was very strict. The inspector searched each of our suitcases and Mother's handbag. Women from the customs office took my mother to a separate compartment and submitted her to a body search. Each passenger was thoroughly searched. Then the inspector searched our train compartment, using a powerful flashlight to check under the benches for hidden objects. I tried to help him in his search, crawling on the floor and under the bench. A sharp tug from my mother brought me to my feet. She lifted me with both hands and put me down firmly into my seat. "Sit here," she said to me in a sharp, commanding tone. Intimidated, I obeyed. After the inspector left, I asked my mother what he was looking for. Had he lost something? Mother said that the inspector hadn't lost anything, and that he was looking for foreign currency and illegal merchandise. The illegal merchandise he was looking for consisted mostly of items made of silk. A pair of silk stockings or a silk blouse was a highly valued gift in Poland. I also found out why Mother had pulled me out quickly from under the bench when the inspector started the search. She had seen the lady sitting next to us hiding a pair of silk stockings under the seat, and she did not want me to help the inspector find them. The lady would not have been pleased.

Across the bridge, at the Polish side of the border, the search was less strict. They checked our travel documents, made a cursory inspection of my mother's suitcase, and let us pass. In the meantime I was gawking at Polish soldiers with their khaki uniforms and four-cornered hats. I also listened to them speaking Polish, a language that

I could not understand. It was very different from Romanian or German, but sounded soft and melodic.

At the railroad station in Zaleshchiki my mother's two cousins were waiting for us. There was a lot of embracing, kissing and talking in Yiddish, everybody speaking at the same time. One of my mother's cousins, Shaindl, a cheerful energetic woman who showed a golden tooth when she smiled, almost squashed me with her embrace. A Yiddish-speaking coachman, with horse and carriage, took us from the rail station to our relatives' home. They lived in the Jewish quarter of the city, in a cramped apartment. Everybody was friendly to me, patted me on the head, and gave me candy. Friends and neighbors came, and soon the place was full of people, chatting, laughing, and drinking tea that Shaindl served with a smile on her face.

Next to the house where my relatives lived was a *cheder*, where a bearded, old rebbe taught little children the aleph-beth and read with them the Torah. There were about a dozen little boys, between the ages of four and six, some sitting on a bench next to the rebbe at a long, wooden table in the dimly lit room, trying to read aloud from a thick, worn-out book. Other children played in the small, dusty courtyard. They wore yarmulkas over their curly hair, had sidelocks, and their raggedy shirts were sticking out from torn short pants. Some of the children wore a *tallit katan*, a sleeveless undershirt, the four corners of which ended in *tzitzit*, tassels of twined cord. The smallest among them had snotty noses. They ran around barefoot, laughed and shouted at each other in Yiddish. It was a lively scene of poor, small children having fun on a warm, sunny day.

Before World War II, Zaleshchiki had a large Jewish community. The Jews living there eked out a living as tradesmen, craftsmen, or small shopkeepers. Many of them were strictly Orthodox Jews. In the Jewish quarter one could see men with long, black overcoats and black caps, with beards and sidelocks, talking lively to each other, gesturing with their hands, or rushing toward some unknown destination.

We spent three days with our relatives before returning home. What I remember from this trip was the crowd of Yiddish-speaking people in Shaindl's apartment and on the street, the poverty in which people lived, and the little boys with sidelocks and torn pants, playing barefoot outside the cheder. Only a few short years later did this world disappear.

Hitler's rise to power in Germany led to an increase in the power and influence of anti-Semitic, ultra- nationalist political parties and movements in Romania. The most

extreme movement was the Iron Guard, under the leadership of Corneliu Zelea Codreanu. Codreanu was a man filled with hatred. He hated democratic ideas and those who believed in them; he hated liberal politicians and intellectuals; he hated the King; but most of all, almost pathologically, he hated Jews. He considered the Jews to be the greatest misfortune that had befallen the Romanian people. As could be expected, he was a great admirer of Adolph Hitler, had his demagogic talent, and Codreanu's speeches could electrify a sympathetic crowd. The official name of his organization was *The Legion of Archangel Michael*, and the members of the Iron Guard called themselves *Legionaries*. Codreanu, the leader of the Legionaries, was called *Capitanul* (The Captain). Their paramilitary units wore green shirts, leather belts around the waist and across the chest, and black trousers tucked into high, black boots. People called them also Green Shirts. When they did not wear their uniform, the Legionaries and other nationalists often wore the Romanian national costume: short, sleeveless sheepskin jacket with colorful embroidery, long, white linen shirt over coarse, white linen trousers, held together by a black or blue-yellow-and-red cotton sash worn at the waist. The Legionaries marched on the street in tight formation, singing about their coming victory over Jews and bandits. The lyrics of their songs proclaimed that "we shall rid the country of all the bloodsucking *jidani* (kikes) and criminals."

All together, the Legionaries were not exactly a kindhearted bunch. In December 1933 they assassinated the Romanian Prime Minister I. G. Duca, whom they accused of being "a friend of the Jews." Codreanu was also a sworn enemy of King Carol II and attacked him openly in his public speeches. The King, feeling threatened by the rising power of the Iron Guard and aware of the strong influence of right wing ideology in the country, appointed at the end of 1937 a nationalist, anti-Semitic government, under the leadership of Octavian Goga and Alexandru C.Cuza. The new government had close ties with the Nazi representatives in Romania, and frequently sought their advice. A.C.Cuza had been a university professor for most of his life, who preached about a Romania free of foreigners. Goga was the theoretician of Romanian anti-Semitism, and acted under the slogan "Romania for the Romanians." The first act of the new government was to issue a host of anti-Jewish legislation, designed to limit drastically Jewish economic activity in the country. In January 1938, a decree was issued that requested the revision of the citizenship of the Jewish population of Romania. A large segment of the Romanian press picked up the Cuza-Goga slogans, and began spreading vitriolic accusations against the Jews. The drumbeat of anti-Semitic

propaganda was led by the fascist Romanian newspaper *Porunca Vremii*. The Jews were accused of dishonesty, and of enriching themselves by deceit. The significant Jewish contribution to the development of Romania's economy was ignored. Jews were described as a malignant, foreign element in the midst of the suffering Romanian people. They were demonized. The incitement spread by Goga's fiery anti-Semitic speeches and by a virulent anti-Semitic press had the effect one could expect. Jews were beaten in public, and Jewish property was destroyed or confiscated. Jewish students, who tried to attend university lectures, were beaten and ejected from the building. The Jewish population lived in the grip of fear.

This fascist government did not last long. The economy deteriorated quickly, and the King realized that the country was sliding into chaos. In February 1938, the King dissolved the Cuza-Goga government, suspended the Constitution, and installed royal dictatorship. He appointed the head of the Romanian Orthodox Church, Patriarch Miron Cristea, as head of government. Under the new government, the situation of the Jews was slightly improved. However, the influence of the Iron Guard kept growing, and their threat to the monarchy increased. To protect his throne, the King had to act decisively. Zelea Codreanu was arrested, accused of subversive activities against the state, and convicted to ten years in prison. The King dissolved all political parties, proclaimed a new constitution, and invested himself with dictatorial powers. In March 1939, after the death of Patriarch Miron Cristea, the King appointed Armand Calinescu as Prime Minister. Calinescu was a foe of the Legionaries, and his political views were more moderate. He tried to improve relations with the Western democracies, especially with France. But his government was short lived. In September 1939, as Calinescu was driven to the office, a horse-drawn cart loaded with firewood blocked his car. As soon as the car came to a halt, several individuals with drawn pistols ran toward the vehicle and raked it with gunfire. Then the assailants fired at short range at the passengers through the vehicle's windows. Armand Calinescu died instantly. The murderers were captured and interrogated. It turned out they were members of the Iron Guard. Another group of Legionaries tried to occupy the Bucharest radio station and was able to enter the building, but was eventually arrested.

The King acted with vengeance. The assassination of the Prime Minister was followed by a blood bath against the Iron Guard. Calinescu's assassins were executed at the place of their crime, and left lying on that spot for twenty-four hours next to a sign with the word "Traitors." Zelea Codreanu was shot, supposedly as he tried to escape

from prison. Many leading Legionaries were arrested and executed. Some members of the Iron Guard fled to Germany.

King Carol II had a friendlier attitude towards the Jews, since he profited handsomely from his association with the wealthiest among them. One of those the King had a very profitable association was Max Auschnit, the founder of the largest steel trust in Romania at Resita. Moreover, it was widely known that the King had a Jewish mistress, Magda Lupescu. With her flaming-red hair, green eyes, milk-white complexion and sharp mind, she had captivated the King's heart and mind when he still was a Crown Prince. It was said that she exerted considerable influence on the King. The Romanian people resented this relationship, not so much for the King having a mistress, as for the fact that she was Jewish. The King, however, maintained his relationship with Mme. Lupescu, in spite of the discontent it generated in the country.

In September 1939, shortly before Calinescu's assassination, World War II broke out in Europe.

In the late 1930s, life became increasingly difficult for my family. The slew of anti-Semitic legislation issued by a succession of rightwing governments made it increasingly difficult for my father to practice his profession. The anti-Jewish atmosphere also penetrated the halls of justice. Once Father came home from court very agitated, pale, and barely able to speak. Questioned by my worried mother, he finally told us that the judge had made mocking remarks about him during the proceedings, in the presence of his client and the public. The mocking remarks referred to my father's German-Jewish accent when he spoke Romanian. Father felt insulted by an insensitive, anti-Semitic judge. Under those circumstances, what client would want to be represented by a Jewish lawyer? Moreover, my father's difficulties with the Romanian language, which he had not been able to master completely, exacerbated the situation. He had fewer and fewer clients in the last years before the war, and it became increasingly difficult for him to support the family with his meager income. Sometimes, after a long hard day, Father went to Druckmann's restaurant, trying to drown his frustration and anger in a glass of wine.

On occasion, without my father's knowledge, Mother had to borrow money from Uncle Joseph to make ends meet. My uncle, who ran his stationary business together with my grandfather, was better off than my father in those days. I was the courier who took the money from my uncle. Mother sent me to the store to ask my uncle for some

money. Uncle opened the drawer underneath the counter, took out two shiny, silvery coins and gave them to me. The coins had on one side the effigy of King Carol II and on the other side the inscription "100 lei." Clenching the coins in my fist I ran home and gave them discreetly to my mother. I knew that I should not tell Father about my mission, since he would have been very upset. Still, I relished my "conspiratorial" role.

Father had few friends, most of them non-Jewish. His best friend was professor Olariu, a Romanian intellectual who used to teach philosophy. He grew up in Austria, attended Austrian schools, and felt more comfortable with the old Austrian intelligentsia than with the new Romanians. Every Saturday evening my father met Professor Olariu and a couple of other friends at Druckmann's cellar restaurant. Over a glass of wine they discussed politics and the latest developments in the world. Father and Olariu were very close. They remained close friends even during the years of rising anti-Semitism, when many Romanians distanced themselves from their Jewish friends. Father and Olariu parted in the summer of 1940, when the Soviets occupied Czernowitz, and the professor left for Romania.

The tensions in society affected also the atmosphere at home. There was rarely any laughter when we were together. I stopped playing in front of the house, afraid of being beaten up by hooligans. Especially my father became strongly affected by the outside events. The difficulties of making a living, the uncertainty about the future, the loss of some non-Jewish "friends" who started avoiding him, all that took its toll. He became more irritable and less patient with me. He rarely walked or played with me anymore. Any disobedience on my part was punished, usually with harsh words, sometimes with the walking stick or belt. As usual, Mother kept her calm, but struggled to manage the family with a shrinking income. Bertha and I went to school, where we had to cope with the hostile attitude of some of our classmates and teachers. During the demonstrations organized by the Legionaries of the Iron Guard or by supporters of the Cuza-Goga government, we stayed home behind locked doors. Jews caught on the street during those demonstrations were brutally beaten. Most of the time we lived in fear.

In the fall of 1938 I entered high school. It was called at the time *lyceum* and was structured after the French *lycee*. The Romanians had adopted the French school system due to historical and cultural bonds between France and Romania, both being Latin countries. In addition to year-end exams, there were comprehensive exams after

the first four years and after the eighth year of school. These exams were called the minor and major baccalaureate, respectively. To enter the lyceum the applicant had to finish grade school and pass an examination in reading, writing, and arithmetic.

There were lyceums for boys and lyceums for girls. My parents sent Bertha to the lyceum No. 2 for girls that was directed by Mrs. Balan. The school had many Jewish students, and there was a friendly atmosphere among them.

My father wanted me to attend the best school in the city. This was the lyceum No.1 for boys, called the *Aron Pumnul* Lyceum. Father was on friendly terms with the school's director, Mr. Leca Moraru, since they had attended school together in Suceava. Mr. Moraru convinced my father to apply at his lyceum. But first I had to pass the admission exam. With the help of my sister I prepared myself seriously for that exam. When the list of those accepted was announced, I was among the top third.

What my parents did not know or ignored at that time was that the school for boys considered the best in Czernowitz had become in the late 1930s the most nationalistic school in town. In those days, strong nationalism was easily identified with strong anti-Semitism. Many of the teachers were supporters of the Cuza-Goga regime, and some of them sympathized with the Iron Guard. Most of the senior Romanian students had also adopted right-wing political ideologies. The students were mostly Romanian and Ukrainian, with only a sprinkling of Jews among them. As soon as school started I realized that I was not the sort of person with whom my non-Jewish classmates would care to mix.

There was almost military discipline in school. When the teacher entered the classroom, the students jumped to their feet as a sign of respect. They sat down only after being told by the teacher to do so. There was no talking in class during the lecture. Any breach of discipline resulted in ejection from the classroom. There was a heavy load of homework. We had to solve arithmetic problems, write essays, memorize poems by the Romanian poets Eminescu and Cosbuc, remember the years when a succession of kings ruled and what battles they fought. Any student caught without his homework done or otherwise unprepared, was given a failing grade that weighed heavily in the computation of the year-end grade. Unannounced 15 minutes written tests (*extemporals)* were frequently given to the whole class. There were monthly tests and quarterly tests, mid-year tests and year-end tests. There were written tests and oral tests. The grade varied from one to ten, one being the worst grade and ten the best. Four or less was a failing grade, while six and seven were mediocre grades. Any student caught cheating

during a test got the grade one. This made it almost impossible to get a year-end passing grade, and the student had to repeat the class.

The teachers were always formal, serious, rarely smiled, and never joked. The treatment of the boys was harsh, the punishment quick. The teacher for arithmetic, Mr. Bujdei, punished a wrong answer or lack of attention in class by pinching the boy's sideburns, pulling up on them until the boy was standing on his tiptoes and tears were filling his eyes from pain. The history teacher, Mr. Teodoreanu, used a wooden ruler to punish the unlucky boy that gave a wrong answer. He ordered the boy to stretch out his hand, then hit the outstretched hand hard with his ruler. He then applied the same treatment to the other hand. To make the punishment more painful, he sometimes used a thin, green branch instead of the ruler. Not to give any satisfaction to the teacher during the application of punishment, the boys tried to hold back their tears. But it was hard not to cry. My geometry teacher, Mr. Trofim, dispensed physical punishment by slapping the boy on the back of his head with a heavy hand. If the boy happened to be Jewish, the slapping was accompanied by name calling, such as *pui de jidan* (kike brat). The teacher's mocking remarks aimed at Jewish boys always caused much laughter and enjoyment among their non-Jewish classmates.

There was one exception among the teachers. It was the natural sciences teacher, Mr. Dragan. He was tall, with an athletic build, and looked quite eccentric in those days. In the highly formal environment of *Aron Pumnul*, he never wore a tie. Mr. Dragan was the only teacher who came to class dressed in slacks, sport shirt, and a short sport jacket. In the warm season he wore sandals, a deed unique at *Aron Pumnul* for both teachers and students. He had traveled over several continents—an unusual feat in those days. His zoology lectures about exotic animals were accompanied by vivid stories about the countries and their environment. The lectures were always sprinkled with funny episodes. He never meted out physical punishment, and did not make any derogatory remarks to any of us. We all enjoyed his lectures, but at the exam he was quite demanding.

When it came to grading, all teachers were very stingy. Some of them never gave the top grade, ten, as a principle. "Ten is for God only," Mr. Bujdei used to say. In Mr. Trofim's class, a Jewish boy never saw a grade better than seven, even if the answers in his tests were perfect. If you were Jewish, you had to deserve a ten in order to get a seven.

During the religion classes, given by an Eastern Orthodox priest, the Jewish boys had to leave the classroom. They had to attend the lessons given by rabbi Wolfsohn. He was a modern rabbi, with a short goatee, large, sad eyes, and a pale complexion. He always wore a dark suit, white shirt, and black tie. In contrast to the other teachers, the rabbi was always kind and friendly with us. He kept apart from the other teachers, who rarely spoke to him. Sometimes there was no classroom available for the Jewish religion class. Then the rabbi gathered the Jewish boys at the end of a hallway or in the corner of the spacious schoolyard, had us sit on the ground, and read aloud a chapter from the Bible. The reading was followed by discussions.

I enjoyed the religion class, which was much more relaxed than any other class in school. I liked to listen to the beautiful stories from the Bible, especially from Genesis and Exodus. I was impressed by the story of Moses, by the miracles he performed, and by his rescue of the Israelites from slavery. I wished secretly that Moses would live in our midst and bring the plagues of Egypt on some of my teachers. But most of all I enjoyed the easygoing and friendly attitude of the rabbi. There was no military discipline; there was no physical punishment. There were no tests during the school year, and the year-end exam was a breeze. It was the only class in which a Jewish boy at *Aron Pumnul* could get a ten at the final exam.

There were times when the discussions with the rabbi became very lively. It so happened that the religion class followed the natural science class taught by Mr. Dragan. In the natural science class we learned that plants and animals have been on the earth for millions of years, and that many animal species have appeared and disappeared in time. We learned about fossils, about evolution, and about Darwin's theory of natural selection. We learned also that man had evolved from the animal kingdom over millions of years. With the lessons of Mr. Dragan still fresh in our mind, the rabbi read to us a different version about the creation of the world. According to the book of Genesis, God created the world in six days. We were not shy and started to ask questions. Which is the true version? The rabbi smiled and did his best to bridge the two very different views of the world. "The Bible often uses figurative descriptions in its narrative" said the rabbi. "Such descriptions could be easier understood by the Hebrews that lived 3000 years ago. Some modern Biblical scholars interpret the word "day" used in the description of Creation as a "period of time." One day in God's creation may be from man's point of view a very long time period, and does not necessarily correspond to one day in our calendar." We could see, however, that the rabbi did not feel comfortable. At the same

time, being mischievous, we children enjoyed asking questions that made the rabbi uncomfortable, although we did not always succeed.

One kid wanted to know why God used only one of Adam's ribs to make a woman; why He didn't use some of the other ribs to make several women – a blond, a brunette, a read head – to give Adam a choice. The rabbi smiled and replied: "God in His infinite wisdom had decided that one woman is enough for Adam." (Later on I understood. Even with one woman Adam got into deep trouble.) Another kid wanted to know why God did not create woman first and man afterwards. The rabbi explained that God created man first because he needed a man's rib to make a woman. (Years later I heard another explanation: God made man before woman because He did not want any advice how to make man.)

On one occasion, when we discussed the creation of the world as described in the book of Genesis, I raised my hand. "Rabbi," I wanted to know, "isn't it true that during the day we get the light from the sun, and at night we get it from the moon and from the stars?" "Of course," replied the rabbi, "every child knows that." "But you told us, rabbi, that when God created the world, He created light on the first day, whereas the sun, the moon, and the stars He created only on the fourth day. Where did the light on the first day come from?" I wanted to know. I thought it was a tricky question and gloated at the thought of seeing the rabbi embarrassed. The last thing I expected was a scientific answer. But the rabbi had one ready. "Scientists," he replied, "have established that the universe was filled with bright, hot gases long before the stars, the sun, and the moon were born. Therefore, science supports the Biblical claim that the existence of light preceded that of the heavenly bodies. Moreover, the order of creation described in the Bible—creation of water and land, followed by the creation of plants, then that of animals, and finally of man—is the same order as the one recently established by science." I liked the answers, and I liked our rabbi. He was a wise and knowledgeable man.

When I was in the second year at *Aron Pumnul*, my parents hired a young man by the name of Mandel to teach me Hebrew once a week. Mandel was a dedicated Zionist from Bessarabia, who made a living teaching Hebrew to Jewish children. Poor children he taught without tuition, since he felt that every Jewish child should know the language of Zion. Since I had already learned the alphabet in kindergarten, I started to learn now Hebrew grammar and vocabulary. I made slow progress, since the Hebrew

language was totally different from German and Romanian. Furthermore, I did not have much enthusiasm for the study of this difficult language, and was more interested in playing ball than in studying Hebrew. Still, after one year of study, I had acquired some basic knowledge of the language.

In May 1940 I finished the second year of lyceum.

While I was in the second year at the lyceum for boys, my sister Bertha was already in the seventh year at the lyceum for girls. The lyceum she attended was located on Landhausgasse near the Jewish quarter, and had a large number of Jewish pupils. Her wit, sharp mind and sharp tongue made my sister quite popular among her classmates. She made many friends in school, and some of these friendships have lasted a lifetime. Among them were Silvia Reiter, Bella Schaerf, Else Schaechter, Mella Pecht, and Schoschana Rabinowitz. (After the war, they all immigrated to Palestine, raised their families in Israel, and have maintained their mutual friendship).

Uncle Joseph and Aunt Cilli, who were members of Jewish-socialist workers organizations, had a strong influence on Bertha. When she was a teenager, they encouraged her to join Hashomer Hatzair (The Young Guard), a left-of-center Zionist youth organization, dedicated to life and work in collective settlements in the Jewish land. My father, who had no political affiliations, was against any leftist movement and opposed such an affiliation. He also felt that it was risky in those times to join such an organization. Bertha, however, was strong-willed and independently minded already in her teens. It was as easy to change her mind as it was to make a dog moo. She ignored my father's opinion and joined Hashomer Hatzair, along with several of her classmates. She became a member of the organization in the late 1930s.

Bertha attended meetings at Hashomer Hatzair several times a week, usually in the evening. Encouraged by her, I tagged along, despite misgivings by my parents. They did not like to see me away from home in the evening, at a time when it was dangerous for Jews to be on the street. I, however, was happy to be among other Jewish children with whom I could talk and play, unafraid of being beaten up or harassed.

The organization was located in the Jewish quarter, where it had rented several rooms in a rundown house. The whitewashed walls were decorated with pictures of Theodor Herzel, Josef Trumpeldor and other Zionist leaders. There were also pictures of sun-tanned chalutzim (collective farm workers) from some distant kibutz (collective farm)

in Palestine. Over the entrance, posted on the wall, was a large cardboard square with a quote from Herzel: "If you want, it will not be a dream."

Hashomer Hatzair was just one of several Zionist youth organizations in Czernowitz. There was the Betar, Hanoar Hatzioni, Dror Habonim, B'nei Akiba, and others. The leaders of the Hashomer organization claimed, without much modesty, to have as members the best and the brightest among the Jewish youths. Indeed, there were many bright Jewish boys and girls in the organization, mostly from middle-class families. They were intelligent, energetic and had a thirst for knowledge. Abrasha Gimpelmann, who was admired by his friends for his vast, eclectic knowledge and sharp mind, was the leader of the organization. He was a big, imposing figure, with black curly hair and dark lively eyes, glancing at the world from behind black-rimmed glasses. He always spoke in a calm voice, with much self-confidence and authority, which sounded very convincing to his audience. He often quoted from the book "Auto-Emancipation", written by the nineteenth century Zionist Leo Pinsker: "For the native Gentiles, the Jew is an alien and a vagrant; for the property holders, a beggar; for the poor, an exploiter and a millionaire; for patriots, a man without a country; for all classes, a hated rival". The solution to this situation, Abrasha said, was for the Jews to become a free people in their own land. That required a new kind of Jew, able to build the land and to defend it. The Hashomer organization wanted to create this new kind of Jew, strong in body and spirit, with a mentality different from the one common among Diaspora Jews. The leaders of Hashomer also believed in sharing possessions in the collective settlements, and in equality between men and women.

The subjects discussed during the meetings were quite diverse, and some were beyond my understanding. There were lectures and discussions about Judaism, socialism, capitalism, nationalism, fascism, imperialism, Darwinism, and other –isms that I don't remember anymore. Topics as diverse as Jewish history, world politics, philosophy, economics, the evolution of life and sexual reproduction were also discussed. The works of Marx, Hegel, Darwin, and Freud were often quoted in those discussions. The names of Hitler, Stalin, Mussolini and Chamberlain were repeatedly mentioned in every political debate. The presentations were given by Abrasha or by other senior members of the organization, and were followed by discussions. The lectures and discussions took place in German, since that was the native tongue of all participants. The discussions were often heated and dragged on, until the leader of the discussion cut them off. When the discussions were over, singing and dancing began.

The youngsters formed a circle, linked arms, and spun into one "hora" after another, while singing at the top of their lungs. That's where I first learned to dance *hava naghilla*.

Bertha made friends in the organization with several bright young men and women. Among them were Selma Meerbaum-Eisinger, Yuda Wasser, and Leiser Fischmann. Selma, a sprite of a girl with dark shiny eyes, curly unmanageable hair and a scattering of freckles across her shapely nose, already wrote poetry in her teens and was one of Bertha's best friends. Yuda, with black intelligent eyes and a curl of black hair dangling over his forehead, tried always to be in the company of my sister. I think he was in love with her. Leiser had a good sense of humor and was attracted to Selma. Boys and girls from different organizations would often come to our house and discuss politics, philosophy and literature. There was very little small talk. They all loved classical music, and Bertha entertained them by playing Beethoven or Chopin on the piano. When Bertha's friends came to visit, I often stayed with them and listened to their discussions. Having no friends of my own, I took pleasure in being in the company of Bertha's friends. Although I could not always follow what they were discussing, I sat in a corner near the sofa and listened. They were six or eight years older than I was, and didn't pay attention to me.

Sometimes it was a motley mixture of young people who gathered around Bertha in our home, and the discussions became quite lively. Among them were communist sympathizers, left-leaning Zionists, right-leaning Zionists, and middle-of-the-road "bourgeois" liberals. When they started a political discussion, they were soon at political loggerheads. Sammy, a communist sympathizer, espoused the internationalist Marxist view that the victory of socialism over oppressive capitalism will bring freedom to all mankind, including the Jews. With a passionate voice he proclaimed that the Jewish masses should join the class struggle against the capitalist oppressors in order to establish an egalitarian socialist society. He dismissed Zionism as a reactionary movement designed to distract the oppressed Jewish masses from the class struggle against capitalism. I did not understand much of what Sammy said, and did not know what class struggle was (was it like a brawl in a classroom?), but it sounded convincing to me.

That viewpoint, however, did not go down well with Baimy, the nationalist Zionist in the group. He was dedicated to the revival of a Jewish State in Palestine, and for him the Hebrew Bible was an historic legacy. "Let others struggle for their freedom, while we should struggle for our own freedom. Instead of inciting Jew against Jew in a class war

that ultimately may lead to a bloody revolution, let's join forces and strive to establish a Jewish State in Palestine. Only in our own land can we be truly free." That also sounded reasonable to me. Of course, such a statement was totally unacceptable to Sammy. He called it "reactionary, Zionist drivel." Then Yuda jumped into the fray. He was a left-leaning Zionist, a member of Hashomer Hatzair. "Why not have a mixed marriage between the two ideologies?" he asked. "Why not create a socialist Jewish State in Palestine? This way we could mesh together the positive aspects of Zionism and Marxism." After Yuda spoke, I tended to agree with him too. But neither Sammy nor Baimy liked that idea.

Finally Harry, the middle-of-the-road "bourgeois" liberal, had his say. He scoffed at the ideas presented so far. For him, democratization of society and integration of Jews into that society was the best solution of all. "I am first a man, then a Jew," was his catchphrase. Emancipation, free participation in the life of a modern, democratic society that grants the Jews full civil and human rights, that was the goal Jews should strive to achieve. Ancient Jewish traditions that are in the way of being accepted into main stream society, such as Chasidic garb, *kashrut*, traditional Sabbath, should be discarded. He claimed that these traditions have become ballast of an age gone by. When he finished speaking, he had convinced me. His ideas, however, were attacked by Sammy and by the Zionists in the group. Sammy claimed that true democracy could be attained only through class struggle against the domineering capitalist class. The Zionists accused Harry of advocating assimilation of the Jew, of abandoning Judaism and Jewish tradition.

Regardless how heated the "the battle of ideas" was, nobody changed anybody's mind. Yet friendship withstood disagreement. The debate came to an abrupt end when Mother walked in with tea and a tray of cookies, while Bertha sat down at the piano. The guests promptly forgot the heated debate and made themselves comfortable on the sofa or on one of the chairs. While they were sipping tea and munching cookies, Bertha played the "Appassionata" sonata by Beethoven or a mazurka by Chopin. The beautiful sounds that emanated from my sister's piano melted away any disagreement, and the atmosphere in the room became again relaxed and friendly.

At the end of such a debate I was confused. To me, everybody had the right idea. I knew, however, that there's got to be a winner. After the visitors left, I asked my sister who the winner was. "When you grow up, you will decide for yourself," was Bertha's crisp reply. I did not like having to wait until I grew up to find out who the winner

of the debate was, but I had no choice. From those debates, however, I became aware that some questions have many answers, and that it is not always easy to decide which one is the best answer. Years later I realized that those discussions had helped me develop a critical judgement and to formulate my own opinions on different subjects.

The Hashomer organization had a small, but very good library. In addition to books about Jewish history and the Zionist movement, there were books about philosophy, sociology, and history, as well as a collection of good novels. Most of the books were in German, and only a few were in Hebrew, Yiddish, and Romanian. The books in German had been printed in Germany and Austria before the Nazi takeover, and offered a wide variety of interesting reading. Bertha borrowed books from the library not just for herself, but also for me. With her guidance, I developed gradually a taste for reading books describing a social or human drama. She kept me away from books describing meaningless violence, which I was tempted to read. However, I read numerous adventure novels, mostly those by the French writer Jules Verne and the German writer Karl May. The adventures described by Jules Verne took me into the depths of the oceans and the high reaches of the atmosphere, while those described by Karl May took me into the Arabian Desert and into the tepees of American Indians. It was fascinating reading.

The activity of Hashomer Hatzair and of other Zionist organizations came to an abrupt end in June 1940, when the North Bukovina was taken over by the Soviets.

On the 23rd of August 1939, the newspapers and radio brought astonishing news: Hitler's Germany and Stalin's Russia had signed a non-aggression pact. Everybody in my family was stunned by the news. "The Nazis and Bolsheviks signing a pact? That is incredible," I remember Father saying, the newspaper with the big headline in his hand. What had been considered totally absurd, impossible until yesterday, had become reality ovemight. There was much agitation in the Jewish community, everybody trying to figure out the consequences of the pact. Father predicted that having eliminated the threat from Russia, Hitler will now occupy the port of Danzig and may invade Poland. Uncle Joseph claimed that Russia had signed the pact with Germany to avoid war with Hitler. He said that the pact was against the interests of France and England, which had signed a pact with Hitler a year earlier at Munich against the interests of Russia. "Stalin had paid back England and France with the same currency," stated Uncle Joseph. But

the question that everybody asked was: what will happen next? Will it be war? We did not have to wait long for an answer.

On September 1, 1939, Nazi Germany invaded Poland from the West and North, and advanced rapidly, deep into the country. The Polish Army fought desperately to defend its land. On September 17, after the German military had occupied nearly half of Poland, the Soviet Union invaded Poland from the East. The Polish resistance crumbled. By the end of September, Poland had ceased to exist.

When the Poles realized that they were losing their country, a flood of refugees started to cross the border into Romania. Old and young, rich and poor, soldiers and civilians—they all tried to escape from the country that was not their own anymore. They came by automobile, by horse-drawn carts, by airplane, and on foot. Czernowitz was only about 20 miles from the Polish border, and the flood of refugees passed through our city. At the end of September, military and civilian Polish planes flew over the city day and night, leaving what was once Poland. At night one could hear the din made by planes flying overhead. Some of the planes landed at the city's airport, while others landed at the Romanian airports of Iassi and Bucharest. A constant flow of automobiles and carts loaded with bundles and suitcases, having little children and old women siting on top, crossed the Dniester over the bridge connecting the two countries. Some Poles who lived close to the border crossed on foot. There were many Jews among the refugees. Some of them had escaped from the German occupied territory and fled to the area occupied by the Soviets. From there, they crossed the border into Romania.

The local Jewish Community Council made a considerable effort to assist with food and housing the Jewish refugees that decided to stay in Czernowitz. Among the refugees were young men and women in their late teens and early twenties, who were members of different Zionist youth organizations. They came from Lemberg, Lodz, Cracow, Lublin and from smaller Galitzian towns. The local Zionist organizations took the youngsters into their care. A soup kitchen was set up for the refugees, old clothes were given to those in need, and housing was provided for them in the Jewish quarter. For the time being, these refugees had found shelter.

Several months after Poland was divided between Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union, it was our turn to gain a new master.

June 1940 brought drastic changes to our lives. After the division of Poland between Germany and the Soviet Union, the Soviets decided to recover additional territories lost in World War I. In June 1940, the foreign minister of the Soviet Union, Viacheslav Molotov, delivered an ultimatum to Romania, demanding the return of Bessarabia. This was a province in eastern Romania that used to be part of Russia. As compensation for the occupation of Bessarabia by Romania for nearly twenty years, the Soviets also demanded Northern Bukovina, including Czernowitz. Since a large part of the population of Northern Bukovina was Ukrainian, the Soviets claimed that the area rightfully belonged to the Ukrainian Soviet Republic. The Romanians were given four days to withdraw from these territories. Having no choice, Romania complied with these demands.

The news about the impending changes came to the residents of Czernowitz like a thunderbolt out of the blue. Panic spread among the Romanian population. The Romanian army and authorities began hastily to evacuate the city. The Romanian middle-class and intelligentsia left the city in a hurry by any means available. Trains were packed to the limit, with people sitting on the roofs and steps of the rail cars. Some people even sat on top of the locomotives. Families paid exorbitant sums of money to carriage owners, to take them and their belongings across the new border.

The Jewish population received the news of an impending change of masters with mixed feelings. The Jews were painfully aware of the anti-Semitic policies implemented by the Romanian government, of the increasing influence of Nazi Germany in Romania, and of the hostility that a large segment of the Romanian population felt towards the Jews. In spite of misgivings about official Soviet atheism, anti-Zionism, and expropriation policies, many Jews--especially the poor and the working class--were happy to exchange Romanian anti-Semitic persecutions for communist egalitarian rule. They welcomed the Soviets as liberators. Some of the well to do Jews, however, apprehensive about the new rulers and their regime, decided to join their Romanian neighbors and fled to Romania. Most of the Ukrainian and German population decided to stay.

My parents were worried by the impending change of rulers. Sitting around the kitchen table, they discussed the upcoming changes. What should we do? Should we leave or should we stay? If we decide to leave, where should we

go? We all had experienced Romanian anti-Semitism and my parents knew that we were not welcome in Romania. Moreover, we did not have the financial means to start life in a new, hostile environment. The idea of joining our relatives in Canada or emigrating to another country was mentioned but promptly discarded, since no country was willing to accept Jews at that time. Although Father had strong misgivings about the Soviet regime, in the end my parents decided to stay.

On June 28,1940, the Red Army entered Czernowitz. I was standing with my mother on the sidewalk near the Ringplatz, in the center of the city. The streets were packed with people awaiting the arrival of Soviet troops. Some of the people talked with excitement to those standing next to them. Others stood in silence, apprehension showing on their faces, while some were just curious. Then the Soviet troops arrived. First came a tank rumbling down the cobble stone-paved street. The hatch was closed and only a port in front of the tank was open. Several people threw flowers at the tank and waved. At some distance, a second tank came rolling down. A Soviet officer was peering out through the open hatch, smiling and waving to the people on the sidewalk. A group of local hotheads, who had climbed on the tank, were waving a red flag and screaming communist slogans. Then came a column of tanks and artillery. A military unit that marched in tight formation followed them. It was an airborne unit, which had landed at the city's airport. They were dressed in dark-brown leather, marched in lock step, looking smart and impressive. More Soviet troops arrived later, in trucks. Among them were steam-powered Ford V8 trucks equipped with wood-burning boilers next to the trucks' cabins. Some of the people on the sidewalk cheered the arriving troops, while others were subdued and watched in silence. Red banners suddenly appeared in the crowd, on several buildings and on top of the city's monuments. Excitement was in the air.

In the temporary vacuum created by the flight of the Romanian authorities, a number of shady elements, Jews among them, moved in. They were mostly the dregs of society, and proclaimed themselves as the Avandguard of the Revolution. Among them were former convicts, laborers, and communist hotheads. In the name of the people, they took over the City Hall, the post office, and other government offices. They began to behave like new masters. Their

rule, however, was short lived. Civilian Soviet administrators, who arrived shortly after the arrival of the military, quickly replaced the self-proclaimed masters. The local communists became advisers, helpers, and informers to the new administrators.

At the beginning the Jews were impressed by the new rulers. The encounter of Yiddish-speaking Jewish officers from the Red Army, the presence of Soviet Jews in high administrative positions, the visit by an array of Yiddish writers from the Soviet Union, the opening of state-sponsored Yiddish schools and theatres—all that impressed the Jewish population of Czernowitz. At the same time, the local population was exposed to an intensive propaganda campaign. Soviet song-and-dance assembles arrived from Kiev, and performed open air free of charge. Soviet movies were shown in public squares free of charge. Loudspeakers, blaring patriotic music from radio Moscow, were installed at major street intersections. The old newspapers were closed down, and the new ones, such as the *Radianskaia Bukovina*, were full of praise for the Soviet regime. The Soviet civilians that came to Czernowitz with the new administration described life in the Soviet Union in the rosiest colors.

It did not take long, however, before people started to discover the facts. The stark reality began to cut though the rosy fog of propaganda. While claiming that everything is readily available in the Soviet Union, the same people bought everything in the initially wellstocked stores in the city. Soon, more and more stores had empty shelves, since the storeowners were unable to replenish the sold merchandise. In the newly occupied territories, the Soviets discovered that most people were better dressed than they were, lived in more comfortable and better furnished apartments, and seemed to have a better life than they expected.

Many things that were taken for granted by the local population appeared to be a novelty or rarity to the Soviets. One example was writing paper. While good-quality bond paper was readily available under Romanian rule, it disappeared quickly from the stores during the first few days of Soviet occupation. So did most of the other good-quality products, such as clothes, shoes, linen, furniture, and fabrics. Even toilet paper became a rarity, and soon people started using old newspapers instead. Sending a letter also became a

problem. Since envelopes were unavailable, people had to use a new form of letter writing. The letter was written on one side of a torn-out page from a school notebook, while the other side of the page was left blank. The letter was then folded into a triangle, with the blank side left outside. On that blank side the sender wrote the address: on top the country or the name of the Soviet Republic, underneath the name of the city, then the street with house number, and at the bottom the name of the addressee. A stamp was affixed and this triangular missive was sent away. It took weeks before the letter reached its destination.

The new rulers brought drastic changes to our city and our life. The Soviet red flag replaced the Romanian national flag on public buildings. The "Internationale" replaced the Romanian national anthem. The Romanian name of the city, Cernauti, was changed to Chernovitsy (the Russian name) and Chernivtsi (the Ukrainian name). The streets were given Russian and Ukrainian names. The official language changed to Russian, the currency changed from lei to rubles, the laws and the bureaucracies changed, the national holidays changed, and even the subjects taught in school changed. A statue of Lenin replaced the bronze statue of the Romanian soldier on the Ringplatz. The new masters brought their own rules regarding what could or could not be done, said, printed, and—later, during the war--even listened to on the radio. The local population had to learn quickly to adapt and cope with these numerous changes.

The composition of the city's population also changed with the rulers, since part of the population fled before the new masters arrived. The new administration, in turn, brought in a significant number of people from its own population, Ukrainians and Russians. These "newcomers" occupied key administrative, military, and judicial positions, and looked often with suspicion and superiority on the "locals." That attitude, in turn, did not gain them much respect from the local population, which began poking fun or make derogatory remarks behind the newcomers' back.

The Russian people we saw on the street were poorly dressed. The men wore ill-fitting, gray or dark suits, made of very cheap fabric. They all wore "*shapki*" (caps), since wearing a hat was considered a "bourgeois" custom. Some men wore "*rubashki*" – shirts worn above the pants and held around the waist by

a leather belt. Many wore tall leather booths. The women wore long, flowery dresses of cheap material that gave the impression of being the wrong size. The women were neither pretty nor ugly – the same standard Soviet mass-production. They tried to make themselves attractive by putting on some lipstick and undulating their hair with an iron. These clumsy attempts of "beautification," however, did not give their hard, unsmiling faces any feminine charm and led to ironic comments by the local population. The Russians, in turn, were not used to some of our clothing. When I walked on the street in short pants, I noticed that the Russians—especially the women—giggled and made funny remarks to each other. Evidently, boys did not wear shorts in the Soviet Union, even in the summer. For the winter, however, the Russians were better equipped than we were. Both men and women wore quilted, gray jackets, rabbit-fur gloves, and "*valenki*" (felt snow-boots). Men who had to work outdoors wore quilted, gray pants. Over their heads men wore fur "*ushanki,*" (fur caps with earflaps), while women wore round fur hats or shawls. These outfits were not elegant, but were very practical during a harsh winter.

The Russian men were heavy smokers. They smoked "*makhorka,*" a rough tabacco that they rolled into thick, shaggy cigarettes using pieces of newspaper. The printer's ink was supposed to contribute to the taste. It was said that the most widespread use of the newspaper "*Pravda*" was not to read it, but to turn it into cigarette paper.

The attitude of the newly arrived Soviets towards the "*mestnye*" (locals) was a mixture of superiority and hidden envy. Superiority for being our new masters to whom we had to submit without complains. Envy for the realization that most locals had more and better material goods than they had. It was their first exposure to a capitalist society and what they saw was very different from what they had been taught in the Soviet Union.

The Soviet officers that came to Czernowitz during the first weeks of occupation could choose as their residence the apartments left behind by the people who fled to Romania. In our building were two such apartments: one belonged to the landlord, and the other to a university professor. Those people fled across the border, taking only a few suitcases filled with clothes and

valuables. Everything else was left behind. Of the two apartments, the one belonging to the former landlord was larger and more elegantly furnished than the other one. In the first weeks of occupation, the vacant apartments were sealed by the Soviet authorities, and later turned over to the military and civilian administration. In mid July, a Soviet officer came to inspect the two apartments in the building. The doorman of the building accompanied him. The doorman had been given by the Soviet administration the authority to show the apartments to potential tenants. Having nothing better to do, I tagged along when the doorman showed the apartments. I can still remember the expression of surprise and amazement on the officer's face. It was quite obvious that never before had he seen such furniture, crystals, or carpets. However, what fascinated him most was a stack of glossy bond paper, sitting on a small desk in the professor's apartment. He kept touching it, feeling it between his fingers, and looking at it again and again. When he finally left, he told the doorman that he would take the professor's apartment, although it was smaller and less elegantly furnished than the landlord's apartment. As incredible as it seems, I think the stack of glossy bond paper had played a role in his decision.

Once in place, the Soviet administration went immediately to work. Banks, factories, larger enterprises, and apartment buildings were nationalized, without any compensation to the owners. New identification papers were issued, called internal passports. They had two types of passports. One type was marked with the No. 39, and was given to former so-called "capitalist exploiters," such as landowners, factory owners, bankers, and large business owners. This was considered a "bad passport." The other type was marked with the No. 40, and was given to doctors, teachers, engineers, clerks, and workers. That was a "good passport." The holder of a "bad passport" had difficulties finding a job, and could be evicted easily from his house or apartment. Later on, people with these passports were the first to be marked for deportation. Small shop- and business owners who had escaped nationalization were hit with exorbitant taxes. Those complaining were blacklisted, and later deported.

Soon, even the basic necessities of life became scarce. People stood in line for hours to buy a pound of sugar, a few ounces of butter, or a bottle of cooking oil. Good-quality clothes and shoes became unavailable. The party and

government bosses, however, had special privileges. They had access to special stores, stocked with gourmet food and high-quality clothes, shoes, watches and other merchandise not available to the public at large. This fact was widely known and was another reason why the average citizen felt resentment towards the regime.

While the lines at food stores grew longer and more stores displayed empty shelves and bare windows, people began to make critical remarks in public about the scarcity of food and goods. Jokes started to circulate about the "abundance" of goods provided by the state. But soon the people discovered that a new element, almost unknown in the past, had appeared in their midst: the informer. People found out that a careless remark about shortages made to a neighbor, an acquaintance, or while waiting in a food line, could lead to arrest and loss of job. Political jokes were no laughing matter under the Soviets. The authorities had planted informers everywhere: in the workplace, on the street, in the queues at the food stores, in the coffeehouses. It was said, only half in jest, that whenever three people got together, one of them was likely to be an informer.

The informers came from all walks of life. Some were idealists, who did inform out of conviction. Others were opportunists, seeing in informing a way to gain favor with the authorities. Some did it for money, while others were blackmailed by the authorities into becoming informers. Through blackmail or threats, many members of what used to be the middle-class or upper middle-class also were forced into becoming informers. Friend informed on friend, neighbor on neighbor, student on student. Even within the same family parents avoided political discussions in the presence of their children, afraid that the children might inform on them in school. Many scores were settled by informing, since no documents or witnesses were required to prove the "anti-Soviet" attitude of the accused. It was no secret that the doormen of apartment buildings were on the payroll of the NKVD, the secret police. They reported regularly about the activities, remarks, and visitors of the tenants. The fate of whole families was often decided by the doorman's report. He became the master of the building and of its inhabitants.

Of the local Jewish population few intellectuals became party members. Most of them had middle-class background and therefore were "unfit" for party membership. But petty craftsmen and workers – tailors, cobblers, carpenters, plumbers – with ambitious dreams of power and of flawless social origin were accepted in the party and given positions in the local administration. To prove their allegiance to the Soviet regime, many of them excelled in their zeal to carry out the assignments of the new masters – any sort of assignment.

There is widespread belief that Jews tend to protect and help each other, regardless of circumstances. Under the Soviet regime, however, Jews in positions of power dealing with other Jews bent over backward to show their "objectivity" and loyalty to the system. They did not want to be accused of protectionism toward their fellow Jews. They wanted to show class solidarity, not national solidarity. As a result, many of the well to do Jews of the city were denounced to the NKVD by "loyal" Jewish party members and by Jewish informers. Under the Stalinist regime, "solidarity" among Jews turned out to be a myth.

The "locals" had to adapt quickly to the new system. They realized that under the new rulers they had to keep their thoughts to themselves and avoid remarks in public that could be perceive as "anti-Soviet." The new rulers lied to the local people by pretending that life in the Soviet society was beautiful, while the local people lied to the new rulers by pretending that they believed it.

As an attorney, my father could not practice his profession under the Soviets. Obviously, the Soviet system of law was completely different from the one my father knew and practiced. Almost overnight he was deprived of his livelihood. Moreover, he was looked upon with suspicion by the authorities, since they associated attorneys with the capitalist class. To earn a living for himself and for his family, he tried selling some of our own belongings, and later those of friends and neighbors. He also started trading in tobacco leaves. There was a public square in the city, the Austriaplatz, were people gathered once a week, usually on Sundays, to sell their merchandise, such as clothes, housewares, and trinkets. Since people sold mostly their own belongings, the authorities tolerated

this kind of trading. Although he worked hard, my father was unable to earn enough to support the family by such trading. Mother had to find a job.

First, she worked in a bookbinding cooperative. Then she started work in a salami factory, where the pay was better. It was not an easy job. She had to stand on her feet the whole day on a cold cement floor, in a damp and smelly environment. By the end of the day she was very tired. The job, however, had one great advantage: occasionally she could bring home a whole salami, without having to wait in line for hours. Mother came home often late in the day, since after a full day of work she and all the other employees had to attend political meetings, organized by the party. At these meetings, the employees had to listen to speeches praising the accomplishments of the Soviet Union and to exhortations to work harder in order to fulfill the assigned norm. Such meetings took place once or twice a week.

Life was more cheerful for us schoolboys. Jewish boys were no longer beaten up or taunted as *jidani* (kikes) by their classmates. Teaching in most schools was done in Russian or Ukrainian. The Soviets set up also two 10-grade Yiddish schools where all the subjects were taught in Yiddish. Parents could send their children to the school of their choice. Since the Yiddish schools had very good teachers, most Jewish parents sent their children to these schools. My parents decided to send me to school No. 26, one of the two Yiddish schools in the city. Since I had completed grade school and the first two years of lyceum under the Romanian rulers, in the fall of 1940 I was admitted into the seventh grade of the Soviet school system.

All school children of my age had to join the "Pioneers," the Soviet youth organization for children, while the older teenagers joined the "Komsomol." We had to wear our pioneer uniform in school: white shirts with a red scarf around the neck, navy-blue pants, white socks, and black shoes. The greeting of one pioneer to another was the exhortation "Be ready!" while saluting with the right hand held in a vertical position in front of the forehead. The reply was "Always ready!" with the same salute. I am not sure what the exhortation "Be ready" meant, but I assume it meant to be ready to serve the motherland. As pioneers we had to make a formal commitment in front of the entire class to study

diligently and to dedicate all our forces to the good of our great Soviet country. We were taught many patriotic songs in both Russian and Yiddish.

The Soviet schools were more than a place to dispense knowledge. In addition to literature (Russian, Ukrainian, and Yiddish), math, sciences, history, geography, and other subjects, we were taught that God does not exist and that religion is just a capitalist tool used to oppress the working class. We were told that everything good in the country is due to the father of all children and of all working people, the great leader Joseph Visarionovitch Stalin. We were taught to hate the "enemies of the working people," and to inform on them.

One of the stories in my Russian textbook was that of Pavlik Morozov. He was a farm boy who denounced his father for hiding grain from the Soviet authorities, grain that he had grown on his own farm. The father was arrested and shot. Other farmers in the community became enraged by the boy's behavior and killed him. He became a Soviet hero. His story was told to every child in the Soviet Union and given as an example of true patriotism. The implication was that a child who sees something illegal done even by his own parents should inform the authorities. The interests of the State were above filial affection. This kind of morality was instilled into children in the Soviet schools at an early age.

In addition to the Russian and Ukrainian theatre, there was a Yiddish theatre in Czernowitz. Plays by Sholem Alechem, Itzhak Peretz, and other classics of the Yiddish literature were performed at the Yiddish theatre, besides the Russian classics and Soviet propaganda plays. Many of the actors, who had performed in the Yiddish theatre during the Romanian rule, performed now under the Soviets. We also had periodic visits from the Yiddish theatre of Kiev that had excellent actors and gave high-quality performances. Tickets were very cheap, and I became a frequent visitor at those performances.

Bertha, who had finished the lyceum under the Romanians, applied and was admitted to a Russia teaching institute, which prepared high school teachers in mathematics and in the sciences. The thorough knowledge she had acquired in the lyceum in these subjects proved to be very useful. It made her studies in the institute much easier. However, attending classes and taking tests in a language she neither spoke nor understood properly, required a considerable

effort. The Russian-German dictionary became the most frequently used book in the house.

Before I reached the age of thirteen, early in 1941, my parents started to prepare me for my Bar Mitzvah. Under the Soviets this was a tricky affair because of the atheistic orientation of the Communist regime. Since the school took the official anti-religious position, I did not tell anybody in school about this event, and tried to keep it secret. Even within my own family I received conflicting input – from my sister and from my grandfather – and was left to sort it out on my own. My sister, who was the most outspoken non-believer in our family, made some dismissive, secularist remarks about this religious custom. She said that the Bar Mitzvah ritual most likely evolved from the ancient rites of initiation for young men of puberty age in primitive tribes, and was probably of pagan origin. She also said that Christians have a similar ritual called Confirmation. My grandfather, however, told me a different story. He said that the Bar Mitzvah is an important Jewish ritual, a moral and religious milestone that marks the transition of a Jewish boy to that of a responsible adult. That it grants the new adult the privilege to be called to the reading of the Torah in *shul* before the entire congregation and to become part of a *minyan*. Grandfather also promised to help me get ready for this event. Of course, these contradictory views about my Bar Mitzvah left me confused. Still, I decided to go ahead with this Jewish ritual, to please my parents and my grandparents and to spite my sister. Another incentive to have Bar Mitzvah was the discovery that this is an occasion to receive some nice gifts.

Two months before the ceremony, Grandfather began preparing me for my Bar Mitzvah. He practiced with me that portion of the Torah I was supposed to read before the congregation in the synagogue. The Hebrew lessons I had taken in previous years proved to be helpful, and after some practice I was able to read the Hebrew text fluently. Grandfather also taught me how to put on *tefillin*. From grandfather I learned that observant Jews put on the tefillin every morning before reciting the Morning Prayer. For my Bar Mitzvah, Grandfather gave me the tefillin and a *tallit* as a gift.

At that time I lived in two different worlds. During the week, when I went to school, I was taught that God is a figment of human imagination, that according to Karl Marx religion is "opium" used by the capitalist class to keep the working people oppressed, to have them resigned to their fate. On weekends, however, when I visited my grandfather, he read with me portions of the Torah that described God's deeds, and he taught me how to pray to Him. All that was quite confusing to a thirteen-year-old schoolboy. I tried to compartmentalize the two contradictory teachings to prevent them from interfering with each other, but was only partially successful. From that experience, however, I learned to look with a critical eye at the different ideas, opinions and ideologies I was exposed to in later years, and not to take every statement I read or heard for granted, regardless of its source.

The Bar Mitzvah ceremony took place in my grandfather's little *shul*, across from the apartment where he and Grandmother lived. Besides my immediate family, only a handful of "regulars" of the *shul* were present. Younger people avoided being seen in a synagogue. The ceremony was brief and simple. With Father and Grandfather standing next to me, each of us wrapped in a prayer shawl, I read in Hebrew from the Scroll of the Torah before the entire congregation. Afterwards, my father recited aloud the required ancient formula. The old rabbi, with watery eyes and a long, white beard, delivered a short speech and gave me his blessings. "Now," he said, "since you have joined the community of adult men, you are responsible for your conduct." At the end of the ceremony, everybody shook my hand and congratulated me. Mother served them *schnapps* in shot glasses of liquor and a slice of honey cake to each guest. She has been fortunate to find a few days earlier all the ingredients necessary to bake a good honey cake. After they had their shot of *schnapps* and slice of cake, the people left. Afraid of the always-present informers, most people avoided any kind of conversation at the end of the service.

After the Bar Mitzvah I found out that my world had not changed much. In spite of my "coming of age" and the rabbi's solemn statement that now I belonged to the community of men, I could not find any benefit in this change of my status. I still had to do my school homework, and my parents still told me what I should or should not do. I still was not allowed to play ball in my mother's

kitchen. I was scolded, as in the past, when I broke a light bulb trying to catch a pesky fly, or when I came home from school with messy clothes and ink-stained fingers. Moreover, I had to get up early in the morning, put on *tefillin* and say the Morning Prayer before going to school. Still, I felt somewhat cocky that I had become an "adult," and looked with an air of superiority on those who were younger than I was, who were mere children. Three months after my Bar Mitzvah, as a result of the atheistic influence at school and the lack of encouragement at home, I no longer put on *tefillin* in the morning and stopped saying the Morning Prayer. I had become an *apykoros*, a nonbeliever.

As on many other subjects, my views with regard to religion have changed over time. Early influences and experiences, however, have left their imprint. During my mature life, when asked about my views regarding a Supreme Being, I replied that I was inclined to accept the view expressed by the 17th century Jewish philosopher Baruch Spinoza. Such a view has been concisely formulated more recently by Albert Einstein: "I believe in Spinoza's God who reveals Himself in the orderly harmony of what exists, not in a God who concerns Himself with fates and actions of human beings."

While we were in the process of adjusting to our new life under the Soviets, war was raging in Western Europe. When I went to see a movie, the newsreel showed burning cities in the West and streams of refugees on foot or in horse-drawn carts, trying to escape the fighting and the bombing. Posters were plastered on the city's walls, comparing the happy life in the Soviet Union with the death and destruction suffered by the people in the capitalist West. On the wall of the building in which we lived, two posters appeared overnight. There was one poster with the caption "Here," showing a happy Soviet woman with a smiling child on her shoulders, waving a little red flag. Next to it was another poster with the caption "Over there," showing a disheveled, weeping woman standing among ruins, holding a dead child in her arms, while airplanes dropped bombs overhead. Little did we know that war would soon sweep over the Soviet Union and its people, bringing death and destruction on a much larger scale than the West had ever seen.

In the spring of 1940 the Soviet newspapers reported under big headlines that the Germans had defeated the Allied armies. On June 14 the Germans entered Paris and hoisted the Nazi flag with swastika on the Eiffel tower. The newsreel showed the German troops marching down the Champ Elisee. Three days later France capitulated. The fall of France sealed also the fate of Belgium, Holland and Luxembourg. Soon thereafter, one European country after another came under the German boot. By the spring of 1941, most of Europe west of the Soviet Union was under German rule or was allied with Germany.

The events in the west generated heated discussions in our family. My father, always a pessimist, worried that soon war will reach us too. Uncle Joseph, also a perennial pessimist, concurred. Aunt Cilli, more optimistic in her outlook, contended that the German – Soviet non-aggression pact would protect us from war. It did not take long before Father and Uncle Joseph were proven right with their prediction.

Shortly after the occupation of North Bukovina by the Soviets, the German population of that area was granted permission by the authorities to apply for exit visas to Germany. This was obviously one of the agreements reached between Germany and the Soviet Union. The Germans, many of them farmers, were more than eager to apply for exit visas. They saw it as a unique opportunity to escape the Soviet rule, and at the same time join their brethren in Germany. Most of them were proud of being German, proud of the Fuehrer, and proud of being able to move to the Reich. The suburb of Kalichanka that had a large number of German farmers saw a true exodus, since the farmers had been promised compensation in Germany for the property they left behind. The Germans gathered at the city's main railroad station with their crates, suitcases and bundles. They were in good spirits, eager to leave. They departed by train for their beloved Reich. Among those who left were also our neighbors, the Kaniuks, and the family of my grade school buddy, Johan. They left in time, before Germany invaded the Soviet Union.

The judicial system instituted by the Soviets was swift and harsh. There were witnesses and defense lawyers during the trial, but they played only a minor role. The fate of the defendant had already been decided before the trial. The trial itself was a well-choreographed performance, in which each participant played the assigned, well-rehearsed part that served only to justify the sentence decided well in advance by the court. The witness testimony always supported the accusations made by the prosecutor. The defense lawyer did not try to prove that the accused was not guilty, but usually admitted his guilt and only asked the court for mercy. There was, however, no room for mercy in the court's decisions.

People who made derogatory remarks about the Soviet system or those who complained of shortages while standing in line, were accused of being "class enemies," of spreading anti-Soviet propaganda, and were sentenced to harsh prison terms, usually up to 20 years. Such sentences created an atmosphere of intimidation and gloom, which made people afraid of expressing their political opinions even in the presence of friends.

The most terrifying aspect of Soviet rule was the "resettlement" program that involved the deportation of large numbers of "undesirables" from the local population. It started on the night of June 13, 1941. The quiet of the night was disrupted suddenly. We awoke in the middle of the night when we heard the rattling noise of trucks speeding through the streets. Then we heard a truck coming to a screeching halt near our building. A few minutes later we could hear through the open window loud crying coming from the street. Without turning on the lights, Mother and I looked out at the dimly lit street. We saw a truck in front of the neighboring building, and next to the back of the truck were standing a man and a woman. The woman was crying. They were sparsely dressed and it was obvious that they have had no time to get fully dressed. Next to them were two uniformed NKVD men, submachine guns dangling from their shoulder. All four climbed into the back of the truck, which then took off into the night. We learned later that in many instances, whole families had been arrested, including the aged, the sick, and the children. If other people happened to be in the house together with the people targeted for arrest, for good measure they also were arrested, although they were not on the NKVD list.

The arrests went on for several nights. During the first night, the screams and crying of those arrested and of their families alerted the neighbors. During the following nights, the authorities blared music over the street loudspeakers through most of the night, so that people would not hear the crying. We learned quickly how to recognize in advance a night of arrests. Around ten o'clock in the evening the conversation in our house stopped. Everybody was tens and nervous. We sat around the kitchen table, watching the clock, while listening to the music coming from the street. When the street loudspeakers continued to blare music past ten o'clock, we knew that arrests would take place during the night.

The NKVD divided those arrested into two categories. The first category was that of "convicts," and consisted of those who had committed "serious crimes" against the working class. These were bankers, big landowners, owners of large businesses, former politicians, leaders of Zionist organizations, and all those considered "exploiters" and "enemies of the working people." Most of those people had No. 39 passports and had been blacklisted from the beginning of the occupation. People who had made derogatory remarks about the Soviet system while standing in long lines to buy groceries and had been turned in by informers were also in that category. The second category was made up of "volunteer settlers," consisting of small business- and land owners, small shopkeepers with a few employees, minor clerks in the Romanian administration, families of those in the first category, and, in general, those who were considered "untrustworthy elements" by the Soviet authorities.

Those arrested were taken to the railroad station and loaded into cattle cars. The "enemies of the people" from neighboring villages were also brought to the railroad station and loaded into cattle cars. Neighbors and friends of those arrested came to the station with small packages of food and clothing. After bribing the guards to look the other way, they slipped the packages to the desperate people in the cattle cars. When the train finally left, the cries of despair of those locked in like cattle reverberated through the station.

During the first year of Russian occupation, about four thousand people were deported from Northern Bukovina. Many of those deported were Jews, since Jews were often involved in occupations that, from the Soviet point of view,

made them "enemies of the people." Leaders of the Jewish community, leaders of Zionist organizations, and members of the Jewish intellectual elite were also deported. Among them was Abrasha Gimpelmann, head of the Zionist youth organization "Hashomer Hatzair," and several other members of that organization.

Those accused of "serious crimes" against the working class were separated from their families and sent to labor camps in the frigid north, mostly to the Komi Autonomous Soviet Republic. A year earlier, "bourgeois" elements and "enemies of the people" from Soviet-occupied Poland and the Baltic states were deported to the same region by Soviet authorities. The camps were in the middle of dens forests, completely isolated, often accessible only on horseback or on foot. The "volunteer settlers" had to sign a document, stating that they agreed voluntarily to resettle. They were deprived of civil rights and were sent to Siberia or Central Asia, where they were allowed to live in rural areas. There they could do menial work, but had no access to any decent jobs. Years later, after the war, those who survived the deportations returned to Czernowitz, and told us about their ordeal.

Who would have predicted that much worse was in store for the Jewish population of Czernowitz? While the people were still trying to recover from the shock of deportations, on June 22, 1941, Nazi Germany invaded the Soviet Union. In the early morning hours of June 22, without any declaration of war, German bombers attacked airports and railroad stations across the western Soviet Union. Soviet planes were caught on the ground and went up in flames. Railroad stations were turned to rubble before the people there realized what was going on. Soviet troops, caught in their barracks, were blasted to pieces. At the same time, large German tank and infantry units crossed the border. A hurricane of fire and steel swept over the Soviet land with devastating fury, from the Baltic to the Black Sea.

In the wee hours of June 22, we were awakened by the blasts of exploding bombs, dropped by German aircraft over the city's airport and railroad station. A few hours later, the voice of Soviet foreign minister Viacheslav Molotov came through the loudspeakers mounted at street intersections: "Brothers and

sisters, a cunning enemy has set foot on our soil." My parents, who had experienced World War I, knew that war leads to immediate shortages of food and of basic life necessities. Mother and I rushed to the market, each of us armed with two large shopping bags. On the streets was panic. Food stores were mobbed. In the open-air market, where peasants sold their produce, anything edible was snapped up in no time. In addition to food, people bought whatever they could find-- fuel, clothes, shoes, toilet paper, matches, candles, flashlights. There was pandemonium everywhere. People knew that the already existing scarcity would only become much worse.

The days that followed saw the same chaos. The air-raid sirens kept wailing day and night, making people scurry repeatedly into air-raid shelters. In most buildings, the cellar was used as a shelter. Signs were posted on the streets, pointing to the nearest underground air-raid shelter. Sandbags were stacked in front of public buildings. The German bombers returned over the city and attacked again the airport and rail station. Black columns of smoke could be seen rising at the airport. The acrid smell of burning building spread over the city. Almost daily German planes flew overhead. The antiaircraft guns, placed on top of tall buildings, in open squares inside the city and in fields surrounding the city, kept barking furiously at the attacking aircraft. Soviet airplanes also appeared in the sky and engaged the enemy aircraft. One German plane was shot down and crashed into a house in our vicinity, killing its inhabitants and the pilot. The constant air alarms deprived people of their sleep, frayed their nerves, and made them feel tense and exhausted.

The major streets of the city were clogged with military vehicles moving to the front. Grim faced Soviet soldiers, wearing khaki uniforms and helmets, were sitting in compact rows in open-air trucks, holding their rifles tightly between their knees. The trucks were covered with green tree branches for camouflage. The traffic was moving south through the crowded streets, towards the Romanian border. Allied with Germany, the Antonescu regime of Romania had joined the Nazis and declared war on the Soviet Union.

The Soviet authorities issued a series of directives to the population, related to the state of war. Total blackout was ordered, fuel was rationed, and a night curfew was declared. The spread of rumors was punished with long prison

terms. To prevent the population from listening to foreign radio broadcasts, an order was issued to turn over all radios to the authorities. Most people complied with the order. Some people, taking great risks, defied the order and kept their radios. Since radio Moscow broadcasted mostly patriotic music and unreliable news bulletins, those who kept their radios listened secretly to the BBC war reports from London. After the first few days of confusion, it became clear that the Germans had overwhelmed the bewildered Soviet troops, had broken through the Soviet border defenses in what used to be Poland, and were advancing rapidly eastward.

The outbreak of war was an exciting time for me. The German airplanes flying over the city, the burning building of the main railroad station, the military convoys racing through the streets raising clouds of dust, the military marches blaring from the public loudspeakers – all that was very exhilarating for a thirteen year-old boy. I helped Mother paste stripes of paper on the windowpanes, filled every bucket in the house with water and helped the doorkeeper of the building to fill buckets with sand to have them handy in case of fire. I went to the railroad station to see the bustling activity on the platform, the bomb-damaged train station, and the movement of trains packed with soldiers and military equipment. I listened avidly to the latest news from radio Moscow and followed the changes on the front on a map from my school atlas. I was so involved in these activities that I didn't have time to play ball any more.

When the war broke out, the Soviets began to mobilize draft-aged men into the Red Army. My cousin Edi Agatstein, Aunt Anna's son, was drafted and sent inside the Soviet Union for training. For him it was the beginning of an arduous life that would take him from Moscow to Berlin. Edi's experiences during the war will be recounted in a later chapter.

About a week after the start of the war, I noticed that the flow of Soviet military convoys had changed direction. The convoys were not moving anymore toward the border, where the front was. They began moving eastward, away from the front. At the same time, Russian families and Soviet civil administrators started leaving town in great hurry. The Soviet retreat had begun.

After the surrender of Northern Bukovina and Bessarabia to the Soviet Union in June 1940, the political atmosphere in Romania remained tense. In early July, a new nationalist government was formed under the leadership of Ion Gigurtu. At the same time, Hungary and Bulgaria intensified their demands for territorial concessions from Romania. Hungary claimed Transylvania, a region in the northwest of Romania with a large Hungarian minority. Bulgaria demanded Dobrogea, a region located between the Danube and the Black Sea. In preparation for its war against the Soviet Union, Nazi Germany insisted that its allies settle their differences. In August 1940, under German pressure, Romania ceded the northern part of Transylvania to Hungary, and Southern Dobrogea to Bulgaria.

The Romanian population was outraged. Most Romanians felt bitter and deeply humiliated by the loss of nearly a third of their country in the span of several weeks. Protest demonstrations took place in Bucharest and other major cities, demanding the abdication of the King. They held Carol II responsible for the disasters that had befallen their country. Under intense pressure, the King invited General Ion Antonescu to form a new government, and invested him with full powers. But the demonstrations against the King continued. To put an end to popular unrest, Antonescu asked the King to abdicate. On September 6, 1940, King Carol II abdicated in favor of his son, Michael. The former King left the country with his mistress, Mme. Lupescu, and with nine railway cars filled with valuable possessions. Thus, the dethroned King made sure that he would have a comfortable and pleasant life wherever he settles. After moving from one country to another, Carol and his mistress settled eventually in Portugal.

A week after King Carol's abdication, General Ion Antonescu declared himself Leader (*Conducator*) of the State. He named Horia Sima, the leader of the Legionary movement, Vice-President of the Council of Ministers. Except for the Legionary movement, all political parties were dissolved. The Legionary government now had absolute power.

The Legionaries unleashed a wave of terror with their reign. Leading Romanian politicians, such as Professor Nicolae Iorga and Virgil Madgearu, were murdered. The Jews, a defenseless and despised minority, were ideally suited as a scapegoat for mass discontent. Embedded in the minds

of the masses for generations and aroused by green-shirted agitators spewing anti-Semitic venom, Jew-hatred exploded with a vengeance. Pogroms were perpetrated against the Jews all over the country. Jewish property was plundered or put to the torch. In Bucharest, Jews were dragged into the city's slaughterhouse and killed. Afterwards their bodies were hanged on hooks like slaughtered cattle, and pieces of paper with the inscription "kosher meat" were attached to each corps. A group of about 100 Jews was marched into the Jilava forest, ordered to undress and then shot.

The terror perpetrated by the Legionaries led to frictions between Ion Antonescu and Horia Sima. Those frictions eventually resulted in an open break. In January 1941, the Legionaries rebelled against Ion Antonescu. After three days of fighting, Antonescu, who had the support of the army, crushed the rebellion. General Ion Antonescu became the sole ruler of the country, restoring order. When Nazi Germany invaded the Soviet Union in June 1941, General Antonescu ordered the Romanian troops to join the war against the Soviets, to liberate the territories lost in the previous year. He also proclaimed himself Marshall.

When the Soviets began their retreat, the Jewish population of Czernowitz faced a dilemma: should they join the retreating Red Army or stay put and await the Romanian–German reoccupation of the city? The military situation changed so rapidly, however, that fleeing the city became almost impossible. Only a few people, mostly party members, joined the Red Army units and fled eastward. Months later we heard that most of those people were captured by the Germans and executed.

In the early hours of July 5th, a tremendous explosion woke us from our sleep. The explosion shattered the windows in our apartment, spreading glass shards all over the parquet floor. We all dressed quickly and ran out to see what was going on. What we saw looked like a scene from Dante's inferno. About two hundred yards from our building lay the demolished building of the city's main post office. The building, which also housed telephone and telegraph equipment, had been blown up by the retreating Soviet troops. Another building across the

street, used by the Soviet authorities to store thousands of confiscated radios, was engulfed in flames. Obviously, the Soviets had no intention of letting those radios fall into enemy hands. Further down the street two well-stocked food stores that used to serve exclusively the party and government elite had also been torched. Flames were leaping from the windows on both sides of the street, and the fires were spreading to the neighboring buildings. Black billows of smoke engulfed the entire street. Fires had also been set on neighboring streets. After blowing up and torching whatever they thought might be of value to the enemy, the Red Army abandoned the city, leaving its center in flames.

Father realized that the spreading fires would soon reach our building. My parents had already packed some of our belongings shortly after the deportations started. They wanted to be prepared in case we were on the NKVD list. We hurriedly started packing the rest of our belongings.

My mother's sister, Aunt Cilli, lived two blocks from our street, on Hormuzakigasse. She had a three-room apartment on the third floor of a building in which the tenants were mostly middle-class Jewish families. My parents and Aunt Cilli decided that we should move to my aunt's apartment. Mother was able to find a porter with a two-wheel pushcart. We loaded the cart with suitcases filled with clothing and linen, cardboard boxes filled with food staples, bundles of pillows and blankets. Together with the porter, we all pushed the overloaded cart in the middle of the street through black clouds of smoke, past the burning and collapsing buildings, until we reached Aunt Cilli's house. Bertha's friend, Selma Meerbaum-Eisinger, joined us to help with the moving. Aunt Cilli gave us one room in her apartment, where we deposited our belongings. Then we went back to our apartment to rescue more of our possessions.

In the meantime, with the Red Army and the Soviet authorities gone, mobs took over the streets. Stores were broken in and looted, the former quarters of the Soviet administration were ransacked, communist symbols were ripped off the building walls, and pictures of Stalin and of other Soviet leaders were torn up and thrown into the street. Some of the abandoned apartments were broken in and looted. The streets were littered with debris, broken glass, and household items lost or discarded either by the overloaded looters, or by those trying to flee the burning buildings. Many in the mobs, who a year earlier

had greeted the arriving Soviet authorities with red flags, were now donning armbands with swastikas. It was amazing how quickly some people could change their ideological orientation when circumstances changed...

On July 5th, around noon, the first Romanian military patrols appeared in the city. They belonged to the Romanian Third Army, and were moving cautiously between the burning buildings. Local civilians, dressed in Romanian national costumes and wearing armbands with swastikas, accompanied them. These civilians were guiding the patrols through the burning, smoke-filled center of the city. Soon, military trucks filled with German troops came rumbling down the debris–covered streets, raising clouds of dust. The new masters had arrived.

When we returned to our apartment, the fire from the adjoining buildings was already dangerously close. Seeing that our apartment could soon be engulfed in flames, my father decided to salvage the most precious object we had in our home: my sister's piano. Using the porter's heavy ropes, my father and the porter carried the piano from the third floor to the street, loaded it on the pushcart, and together we pushed the heavy load down the street. We intended to take the piano to Aunt Cilli's apartment building, and leave it in the lobby until a place could be found for it. As we pushed the cart with the piano, we sow the buildings ablaze on both sides of the street. The bright glare of the flames was dazzling, while the biting smoke stabbed at our eyes. We were coughing and choking from the smoke. The fires roared amidst crashing beams and collapsing walls. We were forced to walk in the middle of the street to avoid the flames and thick smoke that enveloped the burning buildings. Sweat was streaming down our foreheads from the heat and the strenuous physical effort. Father, Mother and I were pushing the cart with the piano, while Bertha carried a stack of musical scores. Selma, always willing to help, carried the piano's music stand under her arm.

We noticed through the smoke a patrol of four Romanian soldiers approaching from the opposite direction. Two civilians wearing armbands with swastikas accompanied the patrol. Having a premonition, my father shouted, "Get out of their way!" and tried to push the cart closer to the sidewalk. But the heat and smoke made it impossible to move any further. In the next moment we

were face-to-face with the patrol. One of the civilians must have recognized that we were Jews. With hatred in his eyes and with the slur *jidani bolsevici* (Bolshevik kikes) on his lips, he pushed the piano off the cart and into my father. The heavy piano fell on him and threw him to the ground. It then crashed on the cobblestones, trapping my father's legs underneath. I could see on my father's contorted face that he was in terrible pain. The other civilian that accompanied the patrol grabbed the piano's music stand from Selma' hand and smashed it against her head. The music stand broke under the force of impact. Selma staggered, while blood began streaming from a large gash on her forehead. It ran down her face and formed deep-red blots on her white blouse. Still cursing, the patrol and its companions moved on. While Mother and the porter moved the cracked piano and helped my father to his feet, Bertha tried to console a distraught Selma. She wiped the blood from her face with a handkerchief, and used soothing words to calm her. My father had a broken leg and was unable to walk. He had to be carried on the pushcart to Aunt Cilli. When we reached my aunt's apartment, Cilli called a Jewish doctor who lived in the same building, and he treated my father and Selma. This was our first encounter with the new masters. Only later did we realize that, in spite of our misfortune, we had been very lucky. We were left alive.

While some Jews had been forced by the pre-war anti-Semitic regimes to cast their lot with the Soviets, all Jews were now perceived by the non-Jewish population and by the Romanian military as supporters and collaborators of the Bolsheviks. The day of the Great Revenge had arrived. In the city's suburbs of Billa and Klokuczka, Romanian soldiers, led by local informants, entered the homes of Jewish families, robbed them of their valuables, raped the younger women, and then shot the inhabitants. Among the victims was a friend of my father's, Dr. Lerner, who was shot in his apartment. We learned the news from a young peasant woman that used to bring milk to our house. Shocking news reached us also from the surrounding towns and villages. People who were able to flee and arrived in Czernowitz reported the rampage and murder of Jews perpetrated by the new occupiers. In the first three days of occupation, mass executions of Jews took place in Siret, Storojinets, Ropcea, Czudin, Jadova, Novoselitsa, Banila, and many other towns and villages of Northern Bukovina.

The murders were carried out by rampaging Romanian soldiers, with the assistance of the local population, mostly Romanians and Ukrainians. It became clear to all in the first few days of occupation that the Romanian troops had been given a free hand to vent their hatred of Jews unrestrained.

Some of the soldiers used murder not only to vent their hatred of Jews, but also as a form of entertainment. One such form was the "enema" treat. A survivor from the village of Banila recounted how a group of soldiers forced his neighbor, a freshly married Jewish man, to undress and to stand on his knees and his elbows in the middle of the road. While two soldiers held the man down, a third one pushed the end of a fire truck hose into the rectum of the screaming victim. While the crying wife of the young man watched, a soldier turned the water on. The immense water pressure ruptured the internal organs of the hapless young man and propelled him tens of yards down the road. Within minutes he was dead. The soldiers, of course, were laughing. They enjoyed their little entertainment.

After the first three days, the commander of the Romanian Third Army, General Petre Dumitrescu, issued a series of decrees. These "Ordonantze" (military decrees) were posted on the walls of buildings throughout the city. The decrees ordered the population to obey the new rules under penalty of death. All weapons, including hunting rifles, had to be turned over to the authorities within 24 hours. Looters were to be shot on the spot. Total blackout was ordered. A curfew was imposed on the Jewish population of the city. "Any Jew caught on the street between 6 p.m. and 8 a.m. will be shot" read the order. After these decrees were issued by the military command, the rampage by the soldiers came to an end. The ordeal of the Jewish population, however, was far from over.

In the first days of occupation, along with German and Romanian troops, the Gestapo also arrived in the city. They set up headquarters in the hotel *Zum Schwarzen Adler* (The Black Eagle). One of their first actions was to arrest Chief-Rabbi Dr. Abraham Mark, Main Cantor Gurmann, and Temple-chorus conductor Towstein. The Gestapo picked them up at their home. I happened to stand at the entrance of our house when the three arrested men walked by, guarded by two armed Germans in uniform. They walked in a single line, one behind the other, with one German in the front and the other in the rear. They were downcast, but

walked with dignity. The deep sadness in their eyes was an indication that they suspected what the Gestapo had in store for them. Several other leading personalities of the Jewish community were also arrested. They were taken to the Gestapo headquarters at "The Black Eagle" hotel." The hotel staff related later that Dr. Mark was kept in an elevator shaft for two days, without food or water. In addition to physical deprivation, this was also psychological torture, since there was the constant threat of being crushed by the moving elevator. As in many other areas that fell under the control of the German army and its allies, among the first steps taken by the Gestapo was to eliminate the spiritual and intellectual leaders of the Jewish community. Deprived of such leadership, the Jewish community was left demoralized and less likely to organize any resistance to future repressive measures.

Shortly after the first Romanian and German troops arrived in the city, I walked with my mother to our apartment to pick up more of our belongings. Mother did not look Jewish and did not expect to be molested on the street. As we passed the Main Reform Temple, we saw that a German military vehicle had stopped in front of the Temple. A German officer got out, planted his booted feet in front of the main entrance, and, with hands firmly set on his hips, inspected the façade of the Temple. After a few minutes he got back into the vehicle and drove off. People who lived across the street related that several hours later, a German military truck loaded with drums stopped in front of the Temple. A military command car accompanied the truck. Several Germans jumped out of the command car, approached the main entrance to the Temple, broke the lock on the door, and entered the Temple. A short while later they emerged, carrying the silver ornaments from the dozen of Torah scrolls that they found in the sanctuary. I had seen these ornaments during the High Holiday services: they were centuries-old, artistically crafted Torah crowns, exquisite silver breast plates, and embossed headpieces with silver bells. The Torah crowns were studded with colorful, semiprecious stones, while the silver breastplates were embellished with lions, pillars and elaborate floral wreaths. The Germans threw the silver decorations into the trunk of the command car, then went to the truck. They unloaded the drums from the truck, and rolled them inside the Temple. It turned out that the drums were filled with gasoline. They poured the gasoline all over the

Temple floor, set it on fire, then quickly emerged and drove off. Soon black smoke began billowing through the windows of the Temple, and flames engulfed its dome. Since the Temple was on a hilltop, this fiery spectacle could be seen from every corner of the city. The Temple continued to burn late into the night, like a huge torch burning on top of a hill. The flames lighted the streets and buildings nearby brighter than daylight, casting trembling, twisting shadows. It was a frightening sight. Next morning, only the blackened walls and the metal girders of the Temple's dome remained standing. We found out later that it was the Gestapo who had put the Temple to the torch.

The Jewish community learned from a Romanian officer that the Gestapo men were under the command of Captain (*Hauptsturmfuehrer*) Finger. While the Temple was burning, Captain Finger and his men were busy at work in other parts of town. They cordoned off several streets inhabited mostly by Jewish families, and carried out a house-to-house sweep, rounding up all Jewish men. Those arrested were taken to a large building, called "House of Culture" under the Soviets, where concerts and artistic performances used to take place. Later in the day, Chief-Rabbi Dr. Mark and his companions were also taken from Gestapo headquarters to this place. After verifying that all those arrested were Jews, they were forced into a column and marched outside the city, to the suburb of Bila. There was an open field, which in the past had been used by the military for target practice. Those arrested were taken to that field, given shovels, and ordered to dig a large ditch. When the ditch was completed, they were lined up and systematically murdered with gunshots to the head. Another group of Jews, rounded up from their homes and forced into a work detachment, was brought in to cover the mass grave. The members of that work detachment brought back the news of the massacre.

The Gestapo had not finished their work yet. The following day they cordoned off another street, went from house to house, arrested all Jewish men, and took them to the House of Culture. They lined them up along the walls of the large dance hall, and ordered them to count to ten. Every tenth person had to step forward, and was taken out of the building. They were herded into a column, marched to a field near the Tsetsina woods, and shot. A Jewish work detachment buried them. The remaining people in the House of Culture were declared "not

guilty" (not guilty of what?) and were released by the Gestapo. It was a sadistic trick, designed to amuse the killers. When the terrified people walked out of the building, they walked into a trap. Snipers had been placed around the House of Culture. Armed patrols were on the streets. As the "freed" Jews were released from the House of Culture, it was late in the afternoon, past 6 p.m., the hour after which any Jew found on the street could be shot. As these unfortunate people walked into the street, shooting started from all directions, from every street corner in the vicinity of the building. Trying desperately to escape the snipers, fleeing, stumbling, dodging bullets, slipping, falling, rising again, running on the blood-splattered pavement, jumping over those fallen and bleeding, their faces distorted by terror, they were driven relentlessly by that primordial instinct--survival. One by one, they were picked off by snipers. The streets around the House of Culture were littered with bodies, lying in pools of blood. Hidden behind a curtain, we could see the running and falling men from the window of Aunt Cilli's apartment. Some of the terrified people escaped into adjacent buildings. One of the wounded, who was bleeding profusely from a leg wound, was able to crawl into Aunt Cilli's building. When the shooting stopped, an eerie silence settled over the bloody scene. Then Jewish work detachments were brought in. They loaded the blood-covered bodies into trucks, took them to the Jewish cemetery, and buried them in two large mass graves. Afterwards the work detachment was ordered to clean the blood-splattered pavement.

From a Romanian officer who was on friendly terms with a member of the Jewish Council, we learned that the Gestapo chief was not happy with the way the whole operation was carried out. Captain Finger had a not-so-friendly discussion with the Romanian commander of the military units that patrolled the area around the House of Culture. The Captain expected the Romanian military to arrest the Jews who were released by the Germans during the curfew, take them to the Tsetsina woods, and shoot them there. He did not expect to see a bloody mess in the heart of the city. Obviously, it went against his Germanic sense of order and cleanliness. He wanted it to be a neat, methodic operation, removed from the view of the non-Jewish population, without corpses spread on the pavement. Captain Finger was also unhappy that some of the people released by the Germans were able to escape. He was upset that the

Romanians did not carry out mass murder with the same efficiency and thoroughness as the Germans did.

In the first week of July, terror and chaos reigned in the city. Jewish patients were kicked out from the main hospital and from the city's mental institution. Jewish children were driven from the city's orphanage. In many parts of the city, bodies of murdered Jews were lying in the street or in looted apartments, since Jews did not venture out to the streets to bury the bodies. During those hot summer days, the stench of dead, decaying bodies was pervasive in many parts of the city. Even those who died of natural causes were kept at home. Only after General Dumitrescu issued the military decrees and some order was established, were the Jews finally able to bury their dead. While the anti-Jewish terror reigned in the city and in the suburbs, German troops marched through the city's main streets, exulting the self-confidence of a master race. Dressed in green uniforms and wearing hobnailed boots, they marched on the cobblestone-covered streets and sang the *Horst Wessel* song, shouting the words: ...*Wenn das Juden Blut vom Messer sprizt, dann geht's nochmal so gut* (When Jewish blood flows from the knife, everything will be twice as good). We did not realize at the time that the song foretold the future Nazi intentions towards the Jews. Whenever I heard on the street the *Horst Wessel* song, a shudder went down my spine and I ran back into our house. "Why do they want to see Jewish blood flow from their knives? Why do they sing such a horrible song?" I asked my sister.deeply distraught. "This song reflects the barbaric ideology of the self-proclaimed 'master race' and 'saviors of civilization'," replied Bertha with a mixture of contempt and concern. "Stay away from soldiers." I did not have to be told twice that I should avoid the German and Romanian soldiers.

As the German and Romanian troops advanced deeper into the Soviet Union and the front moved eastward, some military units left Czernowitz and moved with the front. In the later part of July, the Romanian civilian administration was established.

In mid July several Jewish refugees arrived in Czernowitz from the neighboring province of Bessarabia, and told us about the bloodbath perpetrated by Romanian troops in that province. Thousands of Jewish men, women and

children were murdered in Kishinev, Balti, Hotin, Edinet, Marculesti and numerous other towns and villages of Bessarabia in the first weeks of occupation. A military brothel was set up in Soroca, where young Jewish women and girls were forced to "work." A ghetto was later established in Kishinev for the Jews who survived the massacre. From the ghetto they were eventually deported to Transnistria.

We also learned about the terrible pogrom perpetrated by the Romanian troops in the city of Jassy in Northern Romania. At the end of June several thousand Jews were arrested in that city and herded by soldiers and gendarmes into the courtyard of Police Headquarters. First they were brutally beaten with rifle buts, then the soldiers started firing at short range into the dens mass of defenseless, horrified people. When the shooting stopped, mounds of corpses were lying all over the courtyard. About two thousand four hundred Jews who survived the massacre were driven to the railroad station and loaded into a train of thirty-three freight cars. The army had requested freight cars and not cattle cars, since freight cars could be sealed airtight. Squeezed in like sardines, without water, barely able to breathe, the Death Train as it was later called left Jassy for an unknown destination. Romanian soldiers accompanied the train. During the torrid days and nights the train moved at a snail's pace from one station to another. People became delirious. Then they started to die. They were dying of thirst, of lack of air, of the wounds inflicted during the beatings. The train would stop at a railroad station and unload the corpses. Those still alive, with their throats parched and close to suffocation, were gasping for air. The soldiers answered their desperate cries for water with mockeries and obscenities. The doors were shut and the train continued its winding route. At the next station that scene would be repeated. At the end of the trip, when the few survivors were released from the hellish confinement, their state of mind bordered on madness.

On July 20, 1941, the newly appointed governor of Bukovina, Colonel Alexandru Rosianu, arrived in Czernowitz. He restored a semblance of order in the city. The streets in the center of the city were swept clean, some of the debris from the burned out buildings was removed from the sidewalks, and some shops were opened. The governor also ordered the creation of a Jewish Council to

represent the city's Jewish community. The Council set up its offices in the building of the Jewish hospital, on Stephaniegasse. The Romanian authorities used the Council, headed by Dr. Neuberger, to convey their orders to the Jewish community. The Council had the task of selecting and supplying Jewish labor for the work detachments and later it assisted the authorities in the selection of people for deportation. The Council also supervised the Jewish hospital and orphanage.

Among the first orders given by Roseanu to the Jewish Council was to organize Jewish work detachments that were to be used by the Romanian and German authorities, as needed. Several thousand Jewish men were forced into these units. Jews with some military experience led the detachments. There was plenty of work to be done. The Jewish work detachments were used to clean the streets, the railroad stations, to collect and bury unclaimed corpses, and to demolish the burned out buildings left behind by the retreating Red Army. Under German command, the work detachments helped rebuild the two bridges over the Prut that had been blown up by the Soviets. The members of these detachments, while carrying out what amounted to hard labor, were often brutally beaten by their guards if they did not work fast enough. The German engineering unit "Todt" that rebuilt the bridges excelled in brutalities towards the Jewish laborers, by using iron rods and chains to beat those that did not work fast enough. Many of those beaten, unable to walk anymore, had to be carried by their companions to the Jewish hospital.

At the end of July, Governor Roseanu issued an order, requiring all Jews to wear a yellow Star of David. The star was of a specified size, and had to be worn on the left side of the chest. Any Jew caught outside his home without the star was promptly arrested. By being forced to wear the yellow star, Jews could be easily recognized, avoided, and mocked in public. Whenever they appeared on the street, they were taunted, harassed, insulted and often assaulted. On occasion, Jewish men were grabbed on the street and forced to sweep the streets. Jewish women and girls were picked up and forced to do house cleaning for Romanian families, with no compensation. Young hoodlums made it a sport to pelt with rocks and spit on adults wearing the yellow star. They beat up Jewish children who were also forced to wear the star. The policemen found a new

source of income: they arrested Jewish men and women on the street, claiming that they were trying to hide the yellow star with a briefcase, a handbag, or a book. After being paid a handsome *baksheesh*, those arrested were released.

When Mother learned about the order given by the authorities requiring all Jews over the age of six to wear the Star of David, she decided to make the yellow stars for the whole family. I was eager to help. I cut pieces of shoebox cardboard into triangles of required size, while mother wrapped them into pieces of yellow fabric. She then sawed them together in pairs in the form of Stars of David, and attached them with a safety pin to our clothing.

Some enterprising Jews made artistically designed Stars of David from thin wooden boards, painted them yellow and sold them with a small profit. Many Jews – especially women – bought these artistically designed yellow stars and started to wear them with a certain pride. My sister bought such a yellow star and wore it proudly on her chest. The authorities, however, had no intention to let the Jews use the yellow star as an embellishment, and ordered that only plain yellow stars made of cardboard and fabric should be worn. The artistically designed Star of David had a short life under our new rulers.

Jews were allowed to shop only at specified hours. Shopping in stores was allowed only between 12 noon and 1p.m. In the market, where the peasants sold their produce, Jews could purchase food only between 10 and 12 in the morning, after the non-Jewish population had finished its shopping. When the Jewish housewives arrived at the market, they would find only leftovers, if any food at all. Under those circumstances, they were often forced to buy food on the black market, at exorbitant prices. In addition to paying high prices, the Jewish buyer also ran the risk of arrest, since the law prohibited purchases on the black market.

Taking the racial laws of Nuerenberg as a model, the Antonescu government passed legislation designed to deprive the Jewish population of its civil rights. In the territories occupied in 1940 by the Soviets, additional anti-Jewish decrees were issued. In Bukovina, they were issued by Governor Roseanu and by his successor, General Corneliu Calotescu. Former Jewish properties, such as factories, apartment buildings, and stores that previously had been nationalized by the Soviets, were nationalized or “Romanized” by the new

masters. In those enterprises, where skilled Romanian managers and workers were not available, the former Jewish owners and Jewish workers were allowed to work, provided they trained the assigned Romanian replacement. Once the training was completed, they were dismissed, and many ended up on the deportation lists.

The stationary and office supply store that used to belong to my uncle and grandfather was also "Romanized." The store became the property of a Mr. Nistor. Since he had never been in the stationary business and had no idea how to run the store, he kept my uncle and grandfather to run the business. Mr. Nistor just showed up in the store by the end of the day, collected the receipts, chatted for a few minutes with my uncle, and left. Since he was completely dependent on my uncle and grandfather, he treated them fairly well, and gave them a decent compensation.

Jewish lawyers and journalists were not allowed to practice their profession. Jewish newspapers were prohibited. Jewish teachers could not teach and Jewish children could not attend public schools. Gatherings for religious services, even on holidays, were prohibited. Jews could be evicted from their rented or from their own apartments, with no right of appeal. All these harsh measures were only the beginning of things to come.

In an attempt to escape persecution, several hundred Jews, mostly intellectuals, converted to Christianity. Among them was our neighbor on the Postgasse, Dr. Noe and his family. The baptized Jews did not have to wear the yellow star, did not have to comply with the curfew imposed on Jews, and were not exposed to assaults and mockery in the streets. However, the authorities were skeptical about the sincerity of those converted. They had doubts about all those converts who suddenly discovered the new religion, saw the light, and accepted the teachings of the church. Many Romanians knew that about four hundred and fifty years earlier, under duress, many Spanish Jews had converted officially to Catholicism, but continued to practice their old traditions in secret. The authorities decided to take legal action against many of the new converts. Only with substantial bribes to the prosecutors and judges who handled those

cases were the accused able to avoid harsh penalties. In several instances, the conversions were annulled.

If the situation of the Jewish community in Czernowitz was bad, the news received from the Jews in the smaller towns and villages of Northern Bukovina was much worse. After the executions in the first few days of occupation, the Jews left alive were forced out of their homes and taken to holding camps in Lujeni and Vizhnitsa. Later they were marched to the larger concentration camps of Edinets and Secureni, in Bessarabia. It was a long march, which lasted several days. Moving slow mile after slow mile over the endless fields of Northern Bessarabia, dragging their bundles and suitcases that became heavier by the hour, they advanced slowly towards their destination. Under constant prodding by the gendarmes, deprived of food and water while marching in the searing sun with no rest, some of the older people and children collapsed. Those who died were dumped in ditches along the road and covered with dirt. We found out about these events from people who, under cover of darkness, were able to escape and fled to Czernowitz.

Occasionally, there were Romanians in position of authority, which showed compassion towards the victims of persecution. In mid-July, a small group of Jews came to Czernowitz from the town of Storojinets. They were the survivors of some of the worst atrocities committed in Northern Bukovina during the first few days of occupation. When the survivors arrived in Czernowitz, they were arrested and kept in a cellar at Police Headquarters. Gestapo commander Finger learned about the arrest and requested that those arrested be turned over to him. Police chief Alexandru Grossar, well aware that turning over these Jews to the Gestapo meant certain death for them, refused. After three days, he ordered that those arrested be released. Thus the lives of a small group of Jews were saved, although only temporarily. Shortly thereafter, the police chief was replaced.

During the first week of occupation, we stayed indoors at Aunt Cilli's apartment. After the encounter with the military patrol, we were afraid to go outside. Only twice did Mother venture outdoors to buy some food. My father's legs were hurting and he could barely walk supported by a cane. He spent most

of the time lying down and brooding. He saw the world around him collapsing, and felt helpless. Mother was busy in the kitchen or talking to neighbors to find out what was going on outside. She always appeared calm, regardless how distressing the news was. My sister and I were restless, but did not dare to leave the house. Only once did I go with my mother outdoors. That was when we saw Chief Rabbi Dr. Mark taken away by the Germans. At night, we all bedded down in one room, trying to sleep on the hard floor.

On the fourth day of our stay at Aunt Cilli, we had run out of food. Mother decided to go into town to buy some food and to check out our apartment on Postgasse. She came back with the news that the building with our apartment had been only partially destroyed by fire, but our apartment had been spared. Although the apartment had been broken in and looted, the furniture was still there. After a brief discussion, my parents decided that we should move back to our home.

Our street was barely recognizable. Burned out buildings were standing on both sides of the street. Some of the fire-blackened walls had collapsed, while those still standing had ghostly, rectangular openings, where windows used to be. Roofs and upper floors had collapsed into piles of rubble. Among the blackened ruins, only the chimneys were standing undamaged, reaching out toward the sky. The Post Office building, blown up by the Soviets, and the stock market building, where the confiscated radios had been stored, were empty, burned out shells. Further up the street, "Hotel Gottlieb" had burned to the ground. Bent pipes and twisted iron rods were sticking out among piles of bricks and mortar. Battered bathtubs, metal bed frames, and smashed tile stoves could be seen in the rubble. The acrid smell of burned out buildings was in the air. Some of the former inhabitants were picking through the rubble, looking for a few of their belongings.

Our apartment offered a desolate picture. The entrance door was broken and partially open. Looters had strewed clothing, papers, pictures, and broken dishes over the floor of the apartment. Half-empty drawers, ripped out from the linen chest, were lying on the floor of the bedroom. Glass shards from the windows, broken by the blast set off by the retreating Red Army, were scattered all over the floor. The chandelier in the living room had been ripped out from the

ceiling. The bathroom had been vandalized; the bathroom fixtures were missing, and there was neither water nor electricity.

Mother wasted no time and started the cleanup. Bertha and I also gave a helping hand. Father was too weak to help. We arranged the furniture, removed the trash, and swept the floors. Because we had no running water, we had to carry water in buckets from a neighboring street, up to the second floor to our apartment. Once the broken glass and dishes were removed, Mother got down on her knees to scrub the floors, to make them clean and shiny again. After a full day's work, the apartment looked inhabitable. When night fell, we were happy to be again in our beds.

Since it was summer, the broken windows didn't bother us too much. We grew accustomed to the pervasive acrid smell that came from the burned out buildings. Having no electricity, we went to bed early in the evening, Later on, Mother got hold of a kerosene lamp. We had running water only when it rained—then the water came in through the broken windows, ran down the walls, and made puddles on the floor.

Food and fuel had been strictly rationed. Even with ration cards, people had to stand in long lines to get the basic necessities, such as bread, milk, cooking oil, and fuel. The rations allocated to Jews were smaller and more expensive than those allocated to non-Jews. Separate food lines were set up for Jews. They were served only after the people in other lines had been served. Mother, Bertha and I spent many hours standing in line daily for a loaf of bread or a pound of sugar. There were separate lines for each item, so that each of us stood in a different line. Even then we never knew if we would get what we wanted. Often the stores ran out of food before we could get our share.

Some people tried to avoid standing in line by cutting in front of those already waiting in line. This resulted in a lot of pushing, shoving, shouting and name-calling. Other people resorted to different ruses to avoid standing in line. I remember standing in a bread line when a young woman with a big belly went to the head of the line and tried to enter the store, claiming to be pregnant. Another woman, who was standing next to her, touched that woman's belly and cried out: "It's a pillow, not a baby!" The woman with the big belly blushed and left quickly, accompanied by a variety of expletives from the people standing in line. It is

amazing how imaginative some people can be when they want to do something illegal or dishonest...

In early October 1941, the Antonescu government appointed brigadier-general Corneliu Calotescu Governor of Bukovina. He succeeded Alexandru Rosianu, who had died unexpectedly. Calotescu set up a military cabinet, which consisted mostly of close friends. Although the activity of the cabinet was kept secret, rumors began to circulate about the impending establishment of a ghetto and of the deportation of "undesirable elements." The authorities denied any such intentions. When a battalion of gendarmes was brought into the city, the Jewish community became restless. The community felt that some action was imminent. A Jewish printer, who worked for the government, notified the Jewish Council that forms were being printed regarding the takeover of Jewish apartments and other property. On October 11, Calotescu and his military cabinet took action. Early in the morning, the leaders of the Jewish Council were summoned to the military commander of the city, General Vasile Ionescu. The Council leaders were told that by order of General Calotescu, all Jews had to move by 6 p.m. into a specified section of the city. They were told to take with them only the bare necessities. Any Jew found after 6 p.m. outside the specified area would be shot. When the members of the Jewish delegation asked for a written order, they were rebuffed. An oral order is sufficient, they were told. Obviously, the governor had no intention of giving a document to the Jews that would link him to their persecution. General Ionescu handed the delegation only a map of the city, on which the section assigned to the Jewish ghetto was outlined.

The Jewish leaders hurried back to their community. The news spread like wild fire. Neighbor informed neighbor, friend informed friend, relatives informed each other. Leaflets were typed at the Jewish Community Center and distributed by hand or posted on buildings. Many families, expecting to be moved, had already packed suitcases and boxes with essential clothing and food. Some people had had their suitcases packed since the Soviets began the deportations.

The people moved quickly. The threat of being shot after 6 p.m. if caught outside the ghetto played no small role in the speed at which people packed and moved their belongings. Suitcases, baskets, pillow covers, cardboard boxes were filled with clothes, linens, shoes, dishes, pots, and food. They were loaded on baby carriages, wheelbarrows, or on two- and four-wheel carts, and carried to the ghetto area.

The area designated as ghetto was a poorer section of town, included the Jewish quarter, and was already inhabited by about 10,000 Jews. In the time span of about ten hours, another 40,000 moved into the area. Those who had family or friends in the ghetto moved in with them. Many of those who already lived there shared their quarters with strangers. Some of the people, unable to find any other accommodations, spent the first night on the street.

Mother brought home the news about the establishment of a ghetto. In the morning of October 11 she went to market to buy some food. But she came back sooner than expected, very agitated. On the way to market she heard that we had to move to the ghetto area on the same day. Since the creation of a ghetto has been rumored for several weeks, the news came as no surprise. But none of us expected that we would be given only a few hours' notice. We started packing with feverish haste. Mother told each of us what and how to pack, while Father, my sister and I followed her directives. After all, we already had experience with moving on short notice. Some of our belongings remained still packed from the day we moved to escape the fire. After returning to the apartment, my parents decided to unpack only what was absolutely necessary, since they suspected that soon we would be forced to move again. For that reason, on the morning of October 11 some of our suitcases and boxes were already packed and ready. While we were packing our remaining belongings, my parents debated where to move.

From a neighbor we learned which area had been designated as the ghetto. Fortunately, the apartment of Aunt Cilli was inside the ghetto. Mother ran over to see Aunt Cilli, to ask her if we can move in again into her apartment. She immediately agreed. Soon all of us were carrying, dragging, or pushing suitcases, boxes, and bundles from our apartment, down two flights of stairs, on

the sidewalk along several streets, and up three flights of stairs to Aunt Cilli's apartment. Then we rushed back to our apartment and repeated the process. I was perspiring profusely, sweat running down my forehead into my eyes. My palms were wet, my shirt was drenched, and I felt clammy sweat all over my body. I was tired and my dry throat was burning from thirst, but I did not stop. I had to hurry. On the street I kept bumping into other people carrying suitcases and boxes, everybody in a hurry to reach its destination before 6 p.m. Some were lucky to find enterprising peasants with horse and wagon. For a substantial amount of money the peasants would move the belongings into the ghetto area. We did not have such luck. While we were packing, Bertha's friend Selma arrived. Since she lived in the ghetto area and did not have to move, she came to help us out. It proved again how valid the saying was that in need you find out who your true friends are.

By 6 p.m.-- the deadline set by the authorities to complete the move into the ghetto—we were able to bring all our suitcases and boxes into my aunt's apartment. By nightfall, completely exhausted, we finally sat down on our suitcases to rest. My grandparents and Aunt Anna, who lived outside the ghetto area, also moved to Aunt Cilli's apartment, where we all shared the same room. It was a very crowded place, with the luggage piled in the middle of the room. Mother arranged bedding for us four on the floor in one corner of the room, while the grandparents slept in the opposite corner. Aunt Anna slept in the third corner. It was not a comfortable way to sleep, since we had no mattresses and the parquet floor was hard. We had, however, a roof over our head and we didn't feel the autumn chill.

Outside the apartment, the stairway was packed with people and luggage. Having no friends or relatives who lived in the ghetto area with whom they could move in, these people had to spend the night on the stairways and hallways of buildings. Only later did the Jewish Council help them find a place to live.

By nightfall, the military had put up a 10-foot wooden fence topped with barbed wire at the entrances into the ghetto. There were two entrances, both

guarded by gendarmes. The whole Jewish population was thus sealed off in a small section of the city, looking at an uncertain future.

In the following days, feeling that the time was right to take advantage of those in despair, Romanian civilians descended in droves into the ghetto. They came like vultures ready for a feast. They bought valuables and household goods for ridiculously low prices. In many instances, they didn't bother to pay even those minimal prices. They simply walked away with the goods, knowing well that the Jews were too intimidated to complain. After all, to whom could they complain?

Those "buyers" came also to our room. A young Romanian woman in a chic, flowery dress bought from my grandparents some silver cutlery for a ridiculous price. She then noticed a folded Damask tablecloth, on which Mother had served earlier lunch to our family. The woman grabbed the tablecloth, stuffed it into the large handbag she was carrying, and without saying a word walked out the door. That person stole with no shame, without worrying that everybody in the room saw what she was doing. Stealing from Jews had become legal.

There was also another form of thievery. Exploiting the atmosphere of uncertainty and anguish among the Jews, certain shady characters appeared in the ghetto and claimed to have access to the governor and to his cabinet. They asserted that they could protect a whole family from deportation, for a price of course. The price consisted in jewelry, oil paintings, Persian rugs, or other valuables. Once the valuables had been collected, these individuals simply disappeared, never to be heard from again. Other denied receiving any valuables. Taking shamelessly advantage of the despair of their victims, these unscrupulous individuals enriched themselves by deceit and fraud.

The Romanian National Bank also set up shop in the ghetto. The bank exchanged Romanian leis into Russian rubles, which were still in circulation in Transnistria, the region east of the Dniester. Many Jews, expecting to be deported to Transnistria, exchanged their leis into rubles. The exchange rate was ridiculous. In July 1941, when the Romanians reoccupied the city, the local population had to exchange rubles for leis at par value, receiving one leu for each ruble. The exchange rate in the ghetto was now 40 leis for one ruble.

Jews were ordered to deliver to the bank their valuables, such as jewelry, gold coins, and silver objects. The "compensation" received from the bank was so low, that it amounted to legalized robbery. For example, money received for a gold ring could buy two loaves of bread and a bottle of cooking oil.

Conditions in the ghetto soon became appalling. In many instances, ten or twelve people were crammed in one room. In most buildings, the hallways and cellars were also filled with people. There was insufficient water, since two of the three pumping stations in the city had been damaged by the retreating Soviets. Even elementary hygiene was difficult to maintain. The pungent odor of sweat, intermingled with that of urine and feces, pervaded every building and street. At night, the stuffy, smelly air, the coughing or snoring of the neighbors, as well as the hard floors, made sleeping in the crowded rooms very difficult.

Living in cramped quarters, the shortage of water and absence of soap brought a new plague: lice. They were everywhere: in the hair, in the clothes, in the underwear. Lice do not discriminate. This scourge afflicted old and young, men and women, rich and poor. Mother had my head shaved, so lice wouldn't be able to hide in my hair. I was not happy that my shaved head looked like a bowling ball, but I saw the advantage of not having the little creatures crawling on my head. Still, fighting them was a losing battle. And they spread disease in our midst. Typhus broke out in the ghetto and took its toll, mostly among the old and the very young. The Chevra Kedusha, which handled Jewish burials, was very busy.

Rumors persisted that deportations were imminent. Indeed, on October 11, on the first day of the imposed ghetto, a cattle train packed with Jews from Suceava stopped for several hours at the main rail station in Czernowitz. The train was on its way to Transnistria. In the following days, other trains filled with Jews from Campulung, Gura Humorului, Vatra Dornei, and other towns of Southern Bukovina—an area that had not been under Soviet occupation—passed through Czernowitz on their way to Transnistria. The Jews in the ghetto knew that it was only a matter of days before their turn would come.

The deportations started on October 14. In the morning hours, gendarmes cordoned off a section of the ghetto, where about 5,000 Jews lived. It

was the area around the streets Franzengasse, Dreifaltigkeitsgasse and Franzosengasse. The people were herded from their homes, formed into a convoy, and marched towards the main rail station. The Jews from other parts of the ghetto watched from a distance. I watched the convoy together with my mother. In front of the convoy was Rabbi Friedmann from Bojan, surrounded by his family and followers. He wore his best outfit, carried a Torah scroll in his arms, and walked with calm and dignity in the middle of the street. Men, women and children, each carrying a suitcase, a bundle, or a knapsack, were walking slowly behind the rabbi. Their faces showed sorrow and resignation, and no crying could be heard. Many in the convoy were wearing two or three layers of clothing, since it was easier to carry them that way. Younger members of the family propped up some of the older people. I still can see Mr. Steinberg's mother, in her 80s, all bent over with age and arthritis, wearing a heavy winter coat, with sagging stockings and a dark scarf over her white hair, resting on her son's arm, moving haltingly over the street's cobblestones. Gendarmes accompanied the slow moving convoy. Christian onlookers stood in silence on the sidewalks, watching the column of unfortunates pass by.

At the railroad station, long trains of empty cattle cars were waiting, surrounded by gendarmes. Using their rifle butts, shouting orders and cursing, the gendarmes herded the frightened, demoralized people into the cattle cars. Forty to fifty people and their luggage were squeezed into each car. Once the cattle cars were full, the gendarmes locked the doors, and the train left the station. Then they started filling the cattle cars of the next waiting train. One after another, the trains packed with distraught men, women, and children, together with their bundles, left the railroad station and started on the road to Transnistria. That process went on for two days, October 14 and 15. Then, totally unexpected, the deportation of the Jews of Czernowitz came to a halt. This was the result of the action of a single man. His name: Traian Popovici.

When the Romanians occupied Northern Bukovina in the summer of 1941 and Alexandru Roseanu was named Governor, he appointed Traian Popovici as Mayor of Czernowitz. Popovici was an attorney, who had spent most of his life in the city. Over the years he had established friendly relations with members of the

different ethnic groups that made up the city's population. Although a nationalist, he had learned to respect the culture and customs of the different ethnic groups. He was a man of strong character and integrity. In spite of the wave of anti-Semitism that swept Romania in the years preceding the war, he maintained friendly relations with many Jews, mostly intellectuals. He was familiar with and respected the role played by the Jewish community in making the city a major cultural and economic center. He was friendly with my father, whom he met during their professional activity in the courtroom before the war.

During the summer of 1941, mayor Popovici watched with dismay the brutal behavior of his compatriots towards the Jews. He knew about the beatings, the shootings, and the suspension of basic human rights for Jews. He was upset when he saw Jewish intellectuals, many of whom he knew, being forced to do demeaning hard labor. He was appalled by the arbitrary arrests and shameless extortion practiced by his Romanian compatriots, by the eviction of the sick from hospitals and mental institutions, by the ejection of teachers and pupils from public schools, and by the "Romanization" of Jewish property. As a Romanian, he felt that such behavior by the Romanian authorities and by a large number of Romanians was demeaning for his nation and for his country. As a man of decency and integrity, he felt revulsion and disgust for the injustices perpetrated against a frightened and helpless population.

In the first few months, his attempts to intervene in behalf of the Jewish population were overridden by the Governor and by his military cabinet. He came under attack from anti-Semitic politicians, from nationalistic intellectuals, and from the local Romanian newspaper *Bucovina*. However, the Jewish community and its leaders saw in Traian Popovici the only person in position of authority willing to help them. The community leaders went often to his office to make him aware of the plight of their community and asking for his help.

During a meeting in the Governor's office on October 10, Popovici was told of the planned deportation of the Jews from the ghetto. The plan envisioned the deportation of the entire Jewish population of about 50,000 from the city. The apartments of those deported had to be sealed and taken over by the state, together with their content. The Governor then asked the Mayor to take the necessary measures to facilitate the implementation of his decision.

The Mayor reacted strongly against the plan. He pointed out to the governor that the deportation will have disastrous consequences for the local economy and for that of Bukovina, since it was impossible to replace the Jewish professionals and tradesmen overnight. Furthermore, sending so many thousands of people shortly before winter into war-ravaged Transnistria, where access to food and fuel was extremely limited, meant sending many of those people to their death. The governor remained unmoved. He professed that Marshall Antonescu himself had given the deportation orders and that these orders had to be carried out.

Overnight, however, the Governor changed his mind. He realized that the deportations would indeed cause serious damage to the economy, and that at some point he may be held responsible for that situation. He had to change his plans. In the afternoon of the second day of deportation, on October 15, the Governor summoned the Mayor to his office. In order to prevent damage to the local economy, he told the Mayor that Jews with skills useful to the state would be exempt from deportation. Lists of those people had to be compiled and submitted to the Governor for approval. In the mean time, the deportations had to be stopped. Obviously, the strong stand taken by the Mayor in previous meetings with the Governor had had some effect.

In the evening, the Mayor went to the Jewish hospital to inform the Jewish Council of the Governor's decision. Hearing that for the time being the deportations had been stopped the people were elated. Although they knew that the reprieve was only temporary, they enjoyed the moment to the fullest. Many expressed their gratitude to the Mayor in a highly emotional way, with tears in their eyes. Everybody knew that he was the driving force behind the Governor's decision. Then the Mayor turned over to the Jewish Council the task of compiling the lists. Once completed, the lists had to be submitted to the authorities for verification and approval.

The following morning, long lines formed in front of the school building on Landhausgasse, where the Jewish Council members started to compile the lists. Doctors, lawyers, engineers, businessmen, and tradesmen lined up to apply for residence permits (*Autorizatie*) to remain in the city. Some Jews who had key positions in "Romanized" enterprises, asked for and were given letters by the

new Romanian owners, stating that they were indispensable for the proper functioning of those enterprises. Other Jews, who did not have key positions in those enterprises, received the coveted letters in exchange for substantial bribes. Many Jewish employees in the "Romanized" textile factories of the city received such letters. The Romanian owners were interested in keeping the Jews of their enterprises, since in most cases they themselves had no idea of how to run the business. Those Jews who were able to present such letters to the Jewish Council were put on the list.

The council members did not always decided objectively who would be on the lists. Relatives and friends of the council members ended up on these lists. The initial lists were repeatedly modified, and finally sent to the Mayor's office. His staff had to verify the validity of the claims made by the applicants, based on documents or witness testimony. Once verified, the lists were sent to the Governor for his signature and for the issuing of the residence permits. Nearly 15,000 people received permits from the Governor.

When the Governor refused to issue any more permits, Mayor Popovici started issuing permits under his own signature. In addition to permits for professionals and people with useful skills, he also granted permits to families with small children, to people in the old age home, to children in the orphanage, to hospital and mental patients, as well as to people he knew personally as decent citizens. Popovici knew that the Governor could easily annul the permits issued by the Mayor. However, by using his signature and his position, the Mayor was hoping to delay the deportations. The gamble paid off. While the Mayor was issuing permits, an order arrived from Bucharest to stop temporarily all deportations. It seemed that Marshall Antonescu made the decision after receiving information about the disastrous effect that these deportations would have on the local economy. An urgent plea by Dr. Fildermann, the head of the Council of Jewish Communities of Romania, may also have had some effect. However, everybody knew that the halt was only temporary, and that the deportations could resume at any time.

People with permits signed by Calotescu or Popovici were allowed to leave the ghetto and return to their apartments in the city. In their absence, the authorities had sealed the apartments. However, most of the homes had been

broken in and burglarized. In some instances, Romanian officers or civil servants had moved into the vacant apartments. They were not willing to give up those comfortable living quarters, and threatened with deportation those too persistent. In most cases, this form of blackmail proved to be effective.

Following the initial deportations and the subsequent move of some people out of the ghetto, the fenced-in area became smaller. At the same time, the authorities started a new revision of documents, in order to establish again who may and who may not remain in the city. This time military personnel carried out the revision. Those considered acceptable by the authorities received new identity cards. The ID cards had the word "Evreu" (Jew) printed in large letters across the card. Those who were not able to present all the required documents, or had no permit signed by Calotescu or Popovici, were marked for deportation. A few were able to obtain the new ID cards through bribes or connections. The rest were deported. The last transports left in November 1941.

The assets left behind by those deported were confiscated by the state and turned over to an organization called *Patronaj.* This was a semi-private, social organization, which was supposed to use the confiscated assets to help Romanian war invalids and hospitals. In reality, most of these assets ended up in the hands of key leaders of the organization and of their friends. During the auctioning of confiscated goods, family members of the *Patronaj* bosses and the wives of leading politicians, high-level civil servants and high-ranking officers acquired most of these goods at ridiculous low prices. They filled their homes with exquisite furniture, fine draperies, Persian rugs, oil paintings, crystal, and other valuables, most of them acquired at *Patronaj* auctions. Some of the items were also acquired in the ghetto directly from well to do Jews, at similar ridiculous prices.

Shortly after the first transport left, authorities decided to shrink the ghetto. The surrounding fences were moved, forcing the ghetto inhabitants into a smaller area. The street where we lived in Aunt Cilli's apartment became off limits to Jews. We were given 24 hours to move.

This time, we had no relatives or friends to move in with. While we were packing our belongings, not sure where we will move, Selma arrived. She

suggested that we place temporarily our belongings on the patio of her grandmother's apartment in the Judengasse, where she lived. Afterwards we could start searching for a dwelling. Since we had no better choice, my parents accepted the offer.

We spent the night outdoors on Selma grandmother's patio. These were cold October nights and we did not get much sleep. The following day, my parents went in search of a dwelling. After a long day of frustrating search, they returned in the evening exhausted and depressed. They had been unable to find a place where we could move in. Every room and hallway in the shrunken ghetto was packed with people. Seeing the despair of my parents, Selma's grandmother decided to share her two-room apartment with us. Selma and her grandmother shared one room, while the four of us shared the other room. We were happy to have again a roof over our head and a stove to cook a hot meal.

We had barely settled in our new home, when we heard the news about "residence permits." To avoid deportation, we had to get such a permit from the authorities. The following day, early in the morning, Father went to the office set up by the Jewish Council in the school building on Landhausgasse. In his pocket he carried documents proving his professional status. There were rumors that professional people and those with useful skills had a better chance to receive a permit. Father had to stay in a long line of exhausted, unruly people, their nerves frayed, pushing and shoving, trying to get inside the office. Once inside, they had to convince a harried commission to put their names on the list that had to be sent to the Mayor's office. Everybody knew that only a limited number of permits would be issued. Many believed that the sooner their name appears on the list, the better are their chances of receiving a residence permit. Therefore, the pushing and shoving. Some people tried to gain access to the commission using other means, such as bribes and connections.

After standing in line almost the whole day, his feet hurting, Father came home in the evening totally exhausted. He was able to reach the commission and give them the required documents. But he was not sure if they would put him on the list. After all, a Jewish attorney who was not allowed to practice his profession was not an essential element for the Romanian economy or society.

The names of those to whom permits had been granted were posted daily on the walls of the school building. Day after day did my parents check the lists, but our names were not there. The chances of avoiding deportation were decreasing every day. Gloom turned gradually into despair. Something had to be done. But what can be done?

After another disappointing day my parents decided that Father should try to contact the Mayor in person in order to obtain a residence permit. His acquaintance with the mayor from the days when they both practiced law in the same courthouse may prove helpful. The following morning father went to Traian Popovici's office. People with different petitions crowded the mayor's anti-chamber. After several hours of waiting, father was able to see the Mayor. He recognized my father, shook hands with him, and treated him cordially. He filled out a permit on the spot for my father and for his family. Moreover, to ensure that we receive a permit signed by the Governor, the Mayor gave my Father a letter of recommendation to Governor Calotescu. The letter described Father as an honest, loyal citizen, who belonged to the intelligentsia elite of the city, and asked respectfully the Governor to grant a residence permit to my Father and his family.

The next day, when Father went to the Governor's office, he heard on the street that the General had decided not to sign any more resident permits. Still, my Father was determined to try. At first, the military guard in front of the Governor's building refused to let my Father through. Only after showing the guard the Mayor's letter and slipping a *baksheesh* into his hand, did the guard let him enter the building. Once inside, Father was sent to the office of the General's adjutant. The officer took the letter, read it, and then told my father to wait outside in the hallway. After about two hours the adjutant opened the door and called out "Jew Scherzer." Father rushed to the adjutant, who handed him a piece of paper and without a word closed the door in my father's face. With trepidation, Father looked at the paper. It was a residence permit with the governor's signature. The Mayor's letter had proven invaluable.

Father came home elated. Seeing the permit, my mother also became cheerful. After the long days of nerve-racking waiting, of uncertainty and anguish, we finally had the piece of paper we all craved for: the paper that will allow us to remain in Czernowitz, at least for the time being. It had been a long time since I

had seen my parents in such a good mood...The permit granted to us by the Governor was one of the last he signed. In the days that followed, the permits that were issued had only the Mayor's signature.

While Father was struggling to obtain a residence permit, other members of our family were also striving to get such permits. My grandparents were lucky. Before the war, they happened to live almost next door to the mayor on Karolinengasse, and were well acquainted with him. Over the years they talked often to each other and the Mayor always showed respect for Grandfather's wisdom and dignified behavior. This acquaintanceship helped my grandparents to be among the first to receive residence permits signed not only by the Mayor, but also by the Governor. Uncle Joseph, his wife Ruchel, and child Eli, who were known to the Mayor, also received such permits. The written statement given by Mr. Nistor to my uncle, stressing his importance to the business was also helpful. Since the Mayor sent a note to the Governor, vouching for the loyalty of his neighbors, the Governor signed their permits. Aunt Anna and Cilli, as well as Aunt Jetty with husband Bernhard and 5 year old daughter Gusta, who lived in another part of town, got permits signed only by the Mayor.

Residence permits signed by the Governor or Mayor protected the holders of those permits from deportation. A few months later, however, the difference between the two types of permits was to play a fateful role in the lives of thousands of people.

The news from the front was not good. Since their assault on the Soviet Union in June 1941, the German armies and those of their allies had advanced deep into Russia. Moving fast and with overwhelming force, German tank and infantry units advanced rapidly into Soviet territory, crushing any resistance in their way. The Red Army units that tried to resist were thrashed by massive tank forces, ripped apart with machine-gun fire, blown to pieces with bombs dropped from the sky. By using the *Blitzkrieg* tactic, the Germans were able to inflict horrendous losses to the Soviets, both in men and territory. In a series of pincer battles, such as those in the region Bialistok-Minsk, Smolensk, Viasma, and Kiev, the Germans encircled and annihilated numerous Soviet armies, and took over a

million prisoners. It appeared that the German juggernaut was unstoppable. By the end of November, the German armies were closing in on Moscow.

The Romanian newspapers reported daily with big headlines new advances and victories. In some store windows, maps of the eastern front were on display, with little blue flags showing the daily progress on the front. The German illustrated magazine *Signal* was full with pictures from the front. They showed advancing German armor passing destroyed Soviet tanks, German infantry advancing through burning villages, and endless convoys of bedraggled Russian prisoners of war passing motorized German columns, moving in opposite direction. They also showed pictures of smiling Ukrainian peasant girls receiving smiling German soldiers with bread and salt, the traditional sign of welcome.

What the pictures in *Signal* did not show was how the Nazis treated the Soviet prisoners of war and the population in the conquered territories. People who were able to listen to BBC radio told about reports of atrocities committed by the Germans in occupied Russia: executions, use of the Russian population as slave laborers, mass-killings of prisoners of war. The worst reports, however, were those about atrocities committed by the Nazis against the Jews. Jewish refugees from German-occupied Poland, who managed to escape and cross the border into Romania, brought tales of atrocities and large-scale mass-murder. Not everybody in Czernowitz believed those repots. Many Jewish intellectuals in the Bukovina, educated in Austria and strongly attached to German culture, could not believe that the German *Kulturvolk* (people of culture), as they used to call themselves with pride, was able to commit such atrocities against innocent and defenseless men, women, and children. Only years later, after the defeat of Nazi Germany, did we become aware of the full extent of the crimes perpetrated by the Nazis against the Jewish people. Reality turned out to be much worse than the rumors we heard during the war.

On December 16, 1941, a steamer named *Struma* left the Romanian port of Constanta on the Black Sea with 769 people on board. The steamer was old and not sea worthy, but embarked on a dangerous journey. This sea voyage was a desperate attempt by several hundred Romanian Jews to escape from

the fascist terror. They were trying to reach Turkey, a neutral country, and from there to travel to Palestine. Except for the crew, all people on board were Jews, seventy children among them. They had secured a place on the ship after paying huge bribes to the Romanian authorities and a substantial amount of money to the ship's captain, in the hope of escaping to freedom. Among the passengers was our former landlord, Dr. Simche, and his family. They had left Czernowitz in June 1940, shortly before the Soviets arrived, and had settled in Bucharest. When the vessel reached Istanbul (Constantinople), the Turkish authorities refused to let it pass through the Bosphorus on the way to Palestine. The British government had informed them that the quota for Jewish immigration to Palestine had been filled, and that no further entry visas will be issued to Jewish refugees. The Turks did not allow the passengers to disembark, and the ship drifted off shore for several weeks. As time went by, the living conditions on the vessel became unbearable, and the ship itself, already in bad shape upon arrival in Turkish waters, continued to deteriorate. On February 24, 1942, the Turkish authorities had the *Struma* towed into the open sea, and left it there. Shortly afterwards the ship sank, apparently torpedoed by a Soviet submarine that mistook it for an enemy vessel. Only one passenger survived. Dr. Simche and his family perished along with the rest of the passengers. This was the tragic end of a desperate attempt by a group of Romanian Jews to escape to freedom. After the war, a monument was raised in the Jewish cemetery of Bucharest in memory of those who perished with the *Struma*

For the Jews on the Struma the tragedy had come to an end. For the Jews of Czernowitz, however, the tragedy was only at its beginning.

The Jews deported from Czernowitz, as well as those from the rest of Bukovina, where all sent to Transnistria. That territory is located east of Romania, between the rivers Dniester and Bug. The Romanians named that region Transnistria, which means "On the other side of the Dniester" (Trans-Nistru). The region borders on the Black Sea in the south, while in the north its border is slightly west of Moghilev, not far from the prewar border between the Soviet Union and Poland. Before the war, under Soviet rule, the western part of that region was the Moldavian Soviet Republic, with the capital Tiraspol. The eastern and southern part of that territory belonged to the Ukrainian Soviet Republic. Before 1941, the population of Transnistria consisted of a mixture of different nationalities: Moldovans (relate to Romanians), Ukrainians, Russians, and Germans. There were also tens of thousands of Jews in the area. By August 1941, most of Transnistria had been occupied by German and Romanian troops, except for the port of Odessa and its surroundings. After bloody fighting, Odessa eventually fell to Romanian troops in October 1941. Following the agreement between the German and Romanian government ("The Tighina Convention"), Transnistria came under Romanian administration.

Most of the cities and towns of Transnistria were either destroyed or heavily damaged during the first few weeks of war. Artillery fire and aerial bombing by the Axis forces, followed by explosions and fires set by the retreating Red Army, caused widespread devastation. The villages in the rural areas, however, as well as the kolhozes and sovhozes (collective and state farms), suffered less damage.

The heaviest fighting took place in and around Odessa, a major port on the Black Sea with a significant Jewish population. Although encircled and cut off from any supplies, the city resisted to fierce attacks mostly by Romanian troops until the middle of October. When the city finally fell, the Romanians, who had suffered heavy losses, took their revenge. Besides shooting many prisoners of war and communists, about 40,000 Jews were rounded up and executed by shooting and hanging. The atrocities committed by the Romanian army against the Jewish population of Odessa became especially savage after partisans blew up the army's headquarters.

Marshall Antonescu named Gheorghe Alexianu Governor of Transnistria. He took up residence first in Tiraspol, and later in Odessa. The Romanian

government decided to use Transnistria as a penal colony for "undesirable" elements. Deprived of food, fuel, medicine, and other basic necessities of life, in an area known for its harsh winters, the government expected that these people would die quickly of "natural causes." This was the area where those deported from Bukovina and Bessarabia were shipped. From letters smuggled through couriers from Transnistria to families and friends left behind in Czernowitz we learned later about the fate and travails of those deported.

The trains that left Czernowitz with their human cargo under military escort reached a small village on the Dniester called Atachi. This was one of the crossing points into Transnistria. Across from Atachi, on the eastern shore of the Dniester, was the town of Moghilev. Other trains took their human cargo to the holding camp Marculesti in Bessarabia. The trains arriving in Atachi from Czernowitz disgorged their human cargo and their baggage in the small railroad station. On the ground, the people found themselves surrounded by gendarmes. After traveling in cramped cattle cars, many could barely stand on their feet. Using their rifle butts, the gendarmes pushed the new arrivals to the "custom office," where unscrupulous inspectors searched the new arrivals for "illegal" objects. It was just another way to rob the defenseless victims of anything valuable. Even their documents were taken and destroyed. They had become none-persons. After having passed the custom control, the newly arrived had to wait until the next day to cross the Dniester. Some spent the night on the shore of the river or in a field nearby. Other found shelter in empty barns or in vacant, Jewish houses, whose owners had been killed during the first weeks of the war. On the doorposts of some of those abandoned homes one could still see a *mezuzah*.

During the night gendarmes with flashlights walked around the huddled, exhausted mass of people lying or sitting in the cold field, trying to rest on their bundles. When they saw a man who tried he protect himself against the night chill with what appeared to be a good-quality wool blanket, they grabbed it from him and walked away with it. But the gendarmes were looking mostly for young women. Those they found were ordered to come with them, supposedly to be searched for concealed jewelry. The vehement protests of parents and family were to no avail. They took them to an empty barn, and soon on could hear the screaming of the women being raped. After awhile the women returned, their cloths disheveled, their hair unkempt, and they were crying. Some of the girls

raped were in their early teens. They were still children. The crowd of hapless people, driven from their homes, shipped like animals in cattle cars, robbed of their valuables and deprived of the most elementary human rights and human dignity, was now at the merci of gendarmes. These brutish, cruel men in uniform, many of them illiterate, could now torment with sadistic pleasure their defenseless victims, inflicting physical and psychological harm even on children.

The Dniester was crossed in primitive barges, which could accommodate no more than about twenty people each. Only a few barges were available and it took several days to ferry all the newly arrived to the eastern shore, to Moghilev. Many of the Jews deported from Czernowitz were settled in the Moghilev ghetto, where they found people deported from other parts of Bukovina. Other transports from Czernowitz were sent to Balta and Tulchin counties, east of Moghilev, near the river Bug.

The area assigned to the Jews in Moghilev had been devastated by war. Many of the houses had been destroyed. Other houses, while still standing, had no doors or windows, and had been abandoned. Few of them had stoves. On the threshold of winter, the newcomers had to settle wherever they could find shelter. Only those who had managed to hide some money from the gendarmes and from the "customs inspector" were able to get dwellings with doors and windows.

Once settled in the Moghilev ghetto, the struggle for food began. The Romanian authorities prohibited the sending of food, clothing or money to the Jews of Transnistria. The local peasants would sell their produce at exorbitant prices, and often would trade it only for valuable items, such as clothes. Most of the newly arrived resorted to barter. They exchanged a pair of pants, a sweater, a blouse, or a piece of soap for bread, corn, or potatoes. Malnutrition started to spread in the ghetto. The lack of food, medicine, hygiene and adequate housing led soon to a typhus epidemic. Of the nearly 7,000 people affected, less than half recovered. One could see daily horse-drawn carts passing through the streets of the ghetto, loaded with the stiff bodies of men, women and children, the carts moving slowly towards the cemetery.

The misery and typhus epidemic were exacerbated by an extremely harsh winter, one of the harshest of the century. Icy winds blew incessantly from the Ukrainian steppe, bringing blizzards and bitter cold. Living in dilapidated houses, deprived of adequate heating and clothing, on the brink of starvation,

the old and the weak could not resist. Typhus, hunger, and bitter cold decimated them. Many of those who had brought winter clothes in their luggage had traded them for food in the first month in the ghetto. Getting food was a priority for the starving.

Gradually, the Jews of Moghilev began to organize their lives in the new environment. The nearly 20,000 Jewish inhabitants lived in several ghettoes, each having its own "chief" appointed by the authorities. They set up orphanages for nearly 1,500 children. With the assistance of Jewish teachers, "schools" were improvised for the ghetto children. Jewish craftsmen – tailors, cobblers, tinsmith, cabinetmakers – got together to produce goods or provide services that could be bartered for food with the local peasants. Although the Jewish doctors lacked medication, they set up a medical assistance center. A Jewish engineer, by the name of Jaegendorf, was granted permission by the authorities to repair an abandoned foundry ("turnatoria"), and hire a number of Jews to work there. In the spring of 1942 some of the deportees began planting vegetable on a barren plot, to supplement their meager diet with fresh vegetables. With considerable effort, ingenuity and initiative, under harsh living conditions, the Jewish community of Moghilev did its utmost to make their life bearable. Periodically, the Jews of Moghilev paid bribes to the Romanian civilian and military authorities to avoid further deportation to small villages near the Bug, where life was much harder and more dangerous.

If life was difficult for the Jews of Moghilev, it was much more difficult for those sent to Bershad, a small Ukrainian village in Balta County in northern Transnistria. Since no railroad line passed near Bershad, they arrived there on foot. After crossing the Dniester, they were marched for days over rain-soaked, muddy fields, buffeted by cold winds and drenching rain, under constant prodding by the guarding gendarmes. Many of the weak and sick perished during the long march, and their bodies were left lying in the ditches next to the road. Once arrived in the village, the exhausted, freezing and hungry men, women and children found shelter in abandoned, dilapidated houses. Many of these houses belonged to Jews that had been killed at the beginning of the war by the German-Romanian troops, or had been abandoned by those fleeing the advancing enemy armies. The houses had been looted, and many had no doors or windows. Rain was leaking through the damaged roofs. Cold winds and rain lashed without merci the exhausted bodies huddled together under the leaking

roofs, trying to stay dry and warm. Only later were they able to do some minimal repairs on those houses, to be able to keep out rain and wind. There were about 20,000 deportees in Bershad that came in a series of transports from the ghettoes of Bessarabia, Czernowitz, and Southern Bukovina. There were also about 4,000 local Jews that had survived the massacres of the first weeks of war. Starvation was pervasive, and weakened body and mind. Young women and girls prostituted themselves for a loaf of bread or a bag of cornmeal. During the winter months of 1941/1942, a typhus epidemic, hunger and the bitter cold took a heavy toll on the Jewish community. At that time there were no sanitary facilities, and soap was non-existent. It did not take long before everybody was infested with lice and typhus began to spread through the village. Thousands died during this extremely harsh winter. Old men and children died on the street while begging for food. The corpses were collected from the streets and from the houses, loaded on sleds, and taken to the cemetery. There they were left in a pile until spring arrived, when the soil became soft enough to dig a mass grave and bury the bodies.

Periodically, the Romanian gendarmes selected a group of Jewish men and turned them over to the German organization Todt to work on road and bridge construction. Weakened by hunger and submitted to a brutal slave labor regime, few of these men returned. The Jews of the Bershad ghetto also had to cope with the accusation of supporting the Soviet partisans that roamed in that area. Whenever the partisans blew up a military train or ambushed a military convoy, dozens of Jews from the ghetto were arrested, accused of helping the enemy and executed.

In spite of the brutal living conditions, tormented by their oppressors, by hunger and by disease, the Jews of the Bershad ghetto began to organize themselves to make life more bearable. A Jewish Committee was set up to maintain contact with the authorities. The Committee pleaded with the Romanian rulers of the region, both civilian and military, to improve the living conditions in the ghetto, and funneled the necessary bribes to obtain some concessions. The bribes were collected from the community and were the only means able to influence their arbitrary masters. With the assistance of the Committee a school was established in the ghetto for the children. The deportees even organized some cultural activities, such as occasional literary evenings. Such activities helped them forget temporarily their desperate

situation and lifted their spirits. They had been physically battered by their oppressors, by hunger and by disease, but their spirit had not been broken.

Among the Jews gathered in the ghettoes and camps of Transnistria, those in the southern counties were the worst off. They experienced the savagery of the Romanian fascists to the fullest. In Golta County, where Romanian Colonel Modest Isopescu was prefect (chief administrator), there were three camps of which the one at Bogdanovka was the largest. Most of the Jews in the camp were survivors from the massacres at Odessa and from the southern counties of Transnistria. Before the war they had been Soviet citizens. At the beginning of their internment they were submitted to a savage regime of plunder, hunger and misery. A loaf of bread could be obtained at the camp bakery only in exchange for a gold object. Those without valuable objects that could be exchanged for food starved. Than they started to die. Death from starvation or disease, however, was a process too slow for the colonel. He was an impatient man. In December 1941, Colonel Isopescu ordered the killing by shooting of all remaining Jews in the camp. The old and the sick were locked in barns and then machine gunned to death through openings in the walls. When the killing was completed, the barns were doused with gasoline and set on fire. The remaining Jews were marched in groups of several hundred to a precipice near the Bug river, forced to undress in the freezing weather, and shot. The shooting continued day after day (except for Chistmas), and by the end of December all the Jews in the Bogdanovka camp had been massacred. The corpses of those murdered were burned by a work-detachment of 200 Jewish survivors selected by the Romanian gendarmes to do the job. Once the burning was completed, about 150 of the members of the work-detachment were also shot. The massacre at the Bogdanovka camp was one of the worst atrocities perpetrated by the Romanian fascists during the war. Similar massacres were carried out at the other camps under Colonel Isopescu's administration, at Dumanovka and Akmecetka. After the war, Isopescu was tried in Bucharest as a war criminal and convicted to death. The sentence, however, was later commuted to life imprisonment.

The Romanian authorities prohibited any exchange of letters between Transnistria and Romania. Still, the Jewish community of Czernowitz was able to establish a connection with the Moghilev ghetto through messengers traveling between the two locations. The messengers were Romanian officers or

gendarmes, who traveled between Moghilev and Czernowitz. Connections were also established later with the ghetto of Bershad. For a generous compensation, the messengers carried letters and sometimes money. In the later case, the messenger took as compensation half the money they carried. In more than a few instances, the messengers disappeared with all the money. After all, to whom could the losers complain?

The letters sent from Moghilev and from other Transnistria ghettos reflected the despair of those deported. They begged their friends and relatives in Czernowitz to send them food, clothing and money. Suffering itself from severe shortages, the Jewish community of Czernowitz did its utmost to help those in greater need through the messenger network. Though sending money or packages to Transnistria involved the risk of court martial for both sender and recipient, some assistance still went through. The head of the Jewish Council in Czernowitz, Dr. Ludwig Dische, was very active in organizing the shipment of packages to the ghettoes of Transnistria. He also informed the leadership of the Jewish Federation in Bucharest about the desperate situation in Transnistria. He asked them to organize assistance for those deported and to intervene with the government on their behalf. Gradually, the Federation set up its own clandestine messenger network to help those freezing and starving in Transnistria's ghettoes. The Romanian government, however, ignored the Jewish Federation's pleas. Only after the German defeat at Stalingrad in early 1943 did the Romanian government gradually change its policy toward those it deported.

My father's relatives from Suceava were deported with the rest of that city's Jewish population in October 1941. Most of those deported were sent to Shargorod and Murafa, in northern Transnistria. My father's cousin, Dr. Emanuel Scherzer, a veterinarian, was in a transport sent to Djurin, a village northeast of Moghilev. We were unable to make contact with any of our Suceava relatives during the war. Later we learned that Dr. Emanuel Scherzer, who was frail and with poor vision, had died in the ghetto of Djurin. Non of my father's relatives survived in Transnistria.

In December 1941, when the deportation from Czernowitz of those Jews without residence permits had been completed, the walls of the ghetto came down. Those who had escaped the deportation tried to return to their previous

apartments. Some of the better apartments, including their furniture and household goods, had been taken over by Romanian functionaries and officers, and were no more accessible to their initial Jewish owners. Jewish apartments in mostly run down houses had been left unoccupied, and the owners could return to their homes.

When we tried to move back to our apartment on the Postgasse, we found out that the partially burned out building had been condemned by the city administration. The building had no water, no electricity and the sewage pipes were broken. We had to find another place.

My parents found a small apartment on Morariugasse in the Jewish section of town. A family that had been deported had previously occupied this apartment. It consisted of two small bedrooms plus kitchen and toilet, and was located on the second floor of a two-story apartment building. The other people who lived in the building were also Jews, except for the doorkeeper who was Ukrainian.

We moved our furniture from the apartment on the Postgasse into our new apartment on Morariugasse. Although the authorities had sealed the apartment on Postgasse after we were forced to move to the ghetto, it had been broken in and looted. It was the second time that we returned to a looted apartment. Almost everything we had left behind was missing or broken. Only the larger pieces of furniture that were too heavy to be moved by thieves were still there. Mother hired a peasant with horse and cart, who moved whatever was left of our belongings to the new dwelling.

My grandparents returned from the ghetto to their two-bedroom apartment on Karolinengasse, not far from the burned-out Temple. When Uncle Joseph with wife Ruchel and son Eli went back to their apartment, they found it occupied by a Romanian family. Unable to find another place, they moved in with my grandparents. Aunts Anna and Cilli also lived in the same apartment. The Grandparents and Uncle Joseph's family occupied the two bedrooms, while my aunts slept in the kitchen on cots that were removed during the day. It was a crowded place, but they had a roof over their heads. Aunt Jetty with husband Bernhard and daughter Gusta moved back to their apartment on Wollengasse on the third floor of the building they once owned.

During the harsh, merciless winter of 1941-1942 there was a severe firewood shortage. Firewood was rationed, and the allocation to Jews was very meager. The available firewood was green and wet. When burning, it generated more smoke than heat. Due to the lack of firewood our home turned into an icebox. The windows were covered with large, white ice flowers, while outside the wind was howling and gusting tirelessly. We spent most of the day in the kitchen bundled up in heavy coats, wearing boots and fur caps, trying to ignore the cold. The happiest time of the day was when Mother lit a fire in the stove to cook a meal, usually watery soup and some potatoes. The crackling of wood inside the stove sounded to me like magic. We all crowded around the iron stove, hands and feet almost touching the hot metal, trying to catch as much of the heat as we could. Sitting close to the hot stove I was suddenly seized by a wonderful feeling of well being. The warmth penetrated through my skin, and made me weak and languid. I wanted to drink in the warmth emanating from the stove and dose off. The hot meal also gave my freezing body a respite from the cold. It was a wonderful sensation to feel the warm soup in my stomach. As soon as the fire was out, however, and the last spoon of hot soup was swallowed, the merciless cold took over again.

In the evening, Mother would light a fire in the bedroom stove to drive out some of the cold before going to bed. Although the tile stove in the bedroom kept the heat longer than the iron stove in the kitchen, shortly after the fire went out the room turned again into an icebox. Trying to sleep in a cold, drafty room, while the wind was howling in the chimney, was not easy. Although dressed in caps, wool sweaters and long underwear, burrowed under the bulky goose-down comforter while keeping a passage open to breath, we were still shivering throughout the night. When Father once left a glass of water overnight on the night table, the water was frozen next morning. When the cold became unbearable, Mother would lit a fire in the stove, heat several bricks that she kept near the stove, wrap the hot bricks in towels, and give each of us one of the hot bricks to keep it in bed at our feet. That gave us some temporary relief.

During these freezing nights the water pipes burst and the sewer line froze. We had to bring water in buckets from a neighboring building where water was still running. Mother kept the buckets with water close to the kitchen stove to prevent it from freezing during the day. At night the water would be covered with a layer of ice that would melt in the morning only after Mother lit a fire in the

stove. We couldn't use the toilet anymore and had to use a bucket instead. Its content had to be promptly discarded outdoors before it froze solid.

Father had frequent coughing spasms. The freezing cold, combined with his smoking, had made his cough worse. When he had a coughing fit his face turned crimson and his whole body was shaken by convulsion. Holding on with one hand to the wall or to the table, he pressed his other hand to his chest, as if trying to stop the cough with this gesture. The coughing exhausted him and more and more often he had to rest after the coughing spell subsided.

Since cigarettes were rationed, Father always ran out of them before he could buy a new pack. Whenever he ran out of cigarettes, he became short tempered. His feet were hurting in the cold, since they had never healed completely, and he always walked with a cane. Without income, without an occupation, without hope, tormented by a nagging cough and short of cigarettes, my father was most of the time irascible and in a bad mood. I often felt the consequences of that mood. Whenever I did not do what I was told to do, such as not to play ball in the house or bring firewood from the cellar, I was promptly scolded. I learned quickly to avoid my father when he was irritated. There were also occasional arguments between my parents, but usually Mother kept her cool and Father eventually calmed down.

Buying food during the harsh winter months was no easy task. Getting a loaf of bread in return for a ration coupon required standing in line outdoors in the bitter cold, sometimes during a snowstorm. Even bundled up and stomping the snow constantly in an attempt to keep warm, the cold still penetrated to the bone. Mother, Bertha, and I usually took turns to stand in the same line. While one of us was in line, the others could warm up indoors. When we finally came home with the loaf of bread, we were all frozen and exhausted.

One day, Mother went to visit the Grandparents and Uncle Joseph, who lived at that time together. When Mother came home a few hours later, her eyes were red. We all saw that she had cried. Never before have I seen Mother cry. Alarmed, we asked her what had happened. She told us that on the previous day, while walking home from the store, Uncle Joseph encountered a group of Romanian soldiers. They grabbed my uncle and took him to their quarters. There, the soldiers took turns beating and kicking him. They just wanted to have some fun. The soldiers held him for several hours, and after removing his winter

coat, fur hat and gloves, they kicked him out into the snow. When he arrived home, his face was swollen from the beatings, his blood-shot eyes surrounded by black marks, and his body full of bruises. When mother saw him he was in bed, his body and face covered with cold compresses. It took Uncle Joseph several weeks to recover from that experience.

By the end of March 1942, spring finally arrived. The ice flowers on the windows disappeared, the dirty snow on the streets and sidewalks melted away, and the mild sunshine brought out the first buds on the bare trees in the Volksgarten. Bushes and trees became alive with birdsong. The dreadful winter was behind us.

Although it was a cold spring, with rain and strong winds, the milder weather made life somewhat easier. Standing two or three hours in line for bread or sugar was now easier to bear than during the freezing winter months. The Jewish work detachments still had to do hard labor and face the gendarmes' brutality, but at least they were not freezing while working outdoors. Washing with mildly cold water was less unpleasant than washing with ice cold water. It is surprising how a very bad experience makes a merely unpleasant experience much easier to bear.

The arrival of spring made it possible for my parents to start earning some money. Every Sunday there was a flea market on Austriaplatz, a public square surrounded by apartment- and government buildings. On weekdays the square was used as a food market, where peasants from the city's surroundings sold leftover produce, after selling to the government the required quota. But on Sundays, the city's inhabitants came to the square, either to sell or to buy used household items. Father already had some experience in this kind of business from the time of the Soviet occupation. This time Mother helped out. In the wee hours of every Sunday my parents carried heavy bundles of a variety of household goods to the market, spread them out on the ground on a blanket, and waited for buyers. The merchandise offered by my parents consisted of used dishes, cutlery, a variety of pots and pans, old clothing, linen, tablecloths, worn-out shoes, and all kinds of bric-a-brac. The buyers were Romanian housewives, Ukrainian peasants, Polish craftsmen, and Russian laborers. When a buyer showed some interest in any of the merchandise, the haggling began. Mother turned out to be much better in this business than Father was. My

parents sold our own household goods as well as those of our neighbors and acquaintances. For the sale of goods that did not belong to us my parents received a "commission." Although the earnings from these sales were meager, they allowed my parents to pay for the basic necessities, such as rent and rationed food, and buy some additional food in the market.

The arrival of spring brought a new activity for kids: school. Well, we called it school, although it was quite different from a normal school. In fact, Jewish children were not allowed to attend school, and Jewish teachers had been ejected from schools and from the university. Under those circumstances, Jewish parents decided to bring together the Jewish teachers with the Jewish children and improvise a school. Assisted by the Jewish Council, Jewish teachers started giving private lessons to Jewish children in the teacher's or the student's home. Some of the teachers were former university professors, who had been prohibited from teaching at the Czernowitz University. The parents paid the teachers only a nominal fee, since most of the Jewish families had no income.

We studied the same curriculum as in public schools: Romanian literature, French, Latin, physics, chemistry, math, history, and geography. It was not an easy way to study. There were no textbooks, and most of the studying was done from handwritten notes. The children were often hungry, and it required an extra effort to concentrate on the lesson rather than on the stomach. The teaching was often interrupted by curfews, and later by deportations. The Romanian authorities, which soon found out of the existence of this schooling system, had to be bribed periodically to turn a blind eye. This was the silver lining of living in a corrupt society: with bribes, one could sometimes ameliorate the harshness of persecution. Still, we were hoping some day to be able to take exams at a public school and to get a school certificate recognized by the authorities.

At home, I got additional tutoring from my sister. During the day she worked at a Jewish food distribution center, that provided food to the Jewish hospital and orphanage. In the evening, after work, Bertha spent about an hour with me, helping with math problems, French lessons, or literary essays. She also guided me to reading good literature that she borrowed from her friends. Much later, after the war, the guidance and tutoring provided by my sister, together with the knowledge acquired during the private lessons with different

Jewish teachers, made it possible for me to pass exams and to skip two years of formal high school.

My sister was involved also in other activities. She and some of her friends joined the Zionist youth organization Bethar. Since the organization had a right-wing orientation, its members expected little interference from the authorities. Some of the key members of Bethar were Polish refugees. Among these refugees were three close friends: Shmuel Schmidt, Itzhak Ganzweich and Mordche Moskowitz, who came originally from the Lodz area. In 1939, when Germany and the Soviet Union invaded Poland, they fled to the Soviet-occupied area, while their families remained in Lodz under German occupation. After the Soviet occupation of Northern Bukovina, the three friends came to Czernowitz. Assisted by the local Bethar organization, they moved into a small room not far from our apartment. They supported themselves by trading, both under the Soviets and later under the Romanians. The three also took an active role in organizing the Bethar under the new conditions created by the war and by the Antonescu regime. Meetings took place regularly in the private home of one of the members. They kept changing the meeting place, to avoid drawing the attention of the authorities and of informers.

At one of these meetings Bertha met the three Polish friends. There were often heated debates among them on matters of ideology. Bertha expressed her left-leaning Zionist opinions, acquired in earlier years at Hashomer Hatsair, while the three Poles countered with their right-wing Zionist ideas. Bertha tried to convince her friends that the foundation of a Jewish homeland in Palestine could be laid only by building *kibbutzim* (collective farms), and by turning the desert into farmland. The Poles insisted that the only way to establish a Jewish State was by armed struggle against the British colonial power and against Arab gangs. Still, in spite of frequent differences of opinion, Bertha and Shmuel Schmidt became close friends.

Years later Shmuel told me more about his past. He was born and grew up in the Polish village of Aleksandrow, near Lodz. Shmuel's father, an Orthodox Jew, was a grain dealer. He bought grain from the peasants, took it to a mill to grind it into flour, and sold it to the city's bakers. He had two daughters and three sons, of which Shmuel was the oldest. The village where they lived had a mixed population of Poles, Germans and Jews. When the Germans invaded Poland, Shmuel and several friends tried to flee to Warsaw, but were

soon overtaken by the German troops. He and his friends were detained and locked up in an empty school building. In that group was also a young, attractive woman who spoke German. After a few days of detention, using her charm, she convinced the guard to let the whole group go free, since they were not members of the Polish Army and had not committed any infraction. Once freed, the group disbanded. Barely released from detention, on his way back home, Shmuel was stopped at a German military roadblock and asked for his identification. The papers showed that his name was Schmidt, a German name. The fact that he was blond and blue-eyed also helped. The German concluded that he is a *Volks*-German and let him go.

While the war was going on in western Poland, the Soviets invaded the eastern part of Poland. Polish resistance collapsed. After the Soviet troops occupied the eastern part of the country, the partition of Poland was completed. At the beginning the Germans tried to convince the Jews living close to the new border with the Soviet Union to cross over to the Soviet side. In many instances they just dumped groups of Jews over the border. The Russians, however, refused to accept them. Still, fearing the vicious Nazi anti-Semitism, hundred of thousands of Jews in German-occupied Poland wanted to cross the border into the Soviet-occupied area. Officially, the Soviet troops guarding the new border had orders not to let in any refugees from the German side. Trying to help the refugees, some Soviet-Jewish officers hinted that if they marched to the border waving a red flag and singing the "International" (the international Communist anthem), the refugees would be accepted by the Soviets. The refugees took the hint and thus were able to crossed over in large numbers into the Soviet occupation zone. Shmuel was one of them. Many of those who crossed the border were later deported by the Soviets to the Ural region and Siberia. It is a bitter irony that many of the deported Jews were thus saved from the slaughter by the Nazis after Germany invaded the Soviet Union.

Once in the Soviet–occupied area, Shmuel began to make plans to cross the border into Romania. He did not want to live under the Soviets. He was a dedicated Zionist and was hoping to travel from Romania to Palestine. When he arrived at the border town of Kolomyya, he inquired about the possibility of crossing the border into Romania. He soon found a guide who promised to take him across the border during the night. When darkness fell and the two started to walk towards the border on a narrow path through a forested area, they came

face to face with a Soviet border patrol. It turned out that the "guide" was a Soviet agent who led Shmuel directly into the hands of the border guards. Shmuel was promptly arrested and taken to the commanding officer for interrogation. Shmuel tried to explain to his interrogator that he was unemployed and was looking for work. That he had not been able to find any work in Kolomyya and that he was trying to cross the border and look for work in Romania. The interrogator was apparently convinced and set him free, but warned him not to try again to cross the border. Shmuel was able to come to Czernowitz only after the Soviets occupied Northern Bucovina in the summer of 1940.

There was more to Bertha's membership in Bethar than met the eye. She and some of her friends from Hashomer Hatsair had joined the organization as a cover for antifascist activities. The group met periodically at one of the member's home, supposedly to discuss different Zionist topics. In fact, during these meetings, the group planned and organized a variety of antifascist activities. One of these activities consisted in mimeographing and distributing a collection of news picked up secretly by one of the group members from radio London and Moscow. The mimeographed leaflets contained reports about the losses or defeats the Nazis had suffered on different fronts – news that was never reported in the official Romanian media. The leaflets reported about the latest political activities in the allied countries, about partisan activity behind the Nazi front, and about the barbaric behavior of the Nazis in the occupied areas. The mimeographed leaflets contained also news from the ghettoes and camps of Transnistria. They were designed to inform and to maintain hope in the oppressed and gloomy Jewish community of our city. The mimeographing and distribution of these leaflets was a highly dangerous activity, and none of the other Bethar members knew about it.

In the spring of 1942 I had my first encounter with the Romanian police. I was on my way to the home of one of the Jewish teachers, where I was supposed to take a math lesson together with other boys. It was a cold day and I was wearing my winter coat and cap. While I was walking on the sidewalk, I heard behind me someone yelling: "Hey, you!" I turned around and saw a policeman standing near a lamppost on the sidewalk. He was a tall, bony

individual with dark, penetrating eyes, swarthy complexion, sharp features and a black mustache. In his dark-brown police uniform embellished with gilded brass buttons, a thick leather belt around the waist and revolver holster on the side, he looked strong and intimidating. When he caught my eye, he ordered me with a commanding gesture of his hand to approach him. I felt a chill running down my spine. At home I have often heard my parents talking of the brutality and corruption of Romanian policemen, of their harassment of Jewish pedestrians, and of the extortion of money from innocent people. What could he want from me? I approached him with trepidation. "Are you Jewish?" he asked me in a harsh, raspy voice. "Yes," I replied with a shaky voice. "Where is your yellow star?" he yelled at me. I looked at the lapel of my coat and realized that I was not wearing the star. In the morning I have been in a hurry not to be late for my math lesson, and forgot to transfer the yellow star from my jacket to the winter coat. "You little kike, you think you can walk all over town without the yellow star, don't you?" barked the policeman. "I forgot to put it on my lapel," I blabbered with a weak voice, as if this would be a good reason to forgive my infraction. "You forgot? First you come from Poland illegally, and now you walk around without the yellow star!" he screamed at me, his eyes sparkling with anger. If he wanted to frighten me, he surely succeeded. I knew that any Jew that came from Poland to Romania illegally was sent back to Poland, where certain death awaited him at the hands of the Nazis. I started to tremble and could barely stand on my feet. "I did not say that I came from Poland," I replied meekly. "Liar!" he snarled at me," you did say that you came from Poland!" He then grabbed me by my lapel with his left hand and lashed out with his right hand, landing his fist in my face. I lost my balance and crashed with my head into the nearby metal lamppost. Sparks flashed in front of my eyes, and I felt a sharp pain in my face. Blood started to run from my nose and I realized that by hitting the lamppost with my face I have broken my front teeth. Terrified and bleeding, I started to cry.

At that moment, like a saving angel, Uncle Joseph appeared next to me. A neighbor had seen that a policeman had stopped me and alerted my uncle, who came running. He arrived just before the policeman would take me away. Uncle Joseph talked quietly with the policeman, then slipped him a substantial *baksheesh* into his palm. The bribe disappeared quickly in the policeman's pocket. "Don't you ever walk around without the yellow star," he said in a gruff

voice, shaking his finger at me. He then turned and slowly walked away. My uncle had saved me with a *baksheesh*. Corruption had shown again its benefits. However, my uncle arrived too late to save my teeth. Only many years later was I able to fix my broken front teeth.

In spite of constant harassment and persecutions, the Jews of Czernowitz were still able to poke fun at themselves and at their enemies. When two Jews got together, they usually talked about the situation on the front, about the latest anti-Jewish edicts issued by the government, or about the abuses perpetrated by some local policeman. These conversations were very depressing and left them with a feeling of gloom and doom. To console one another, they told jokes. Humor has often been a weapon used by Jews in times of despair to fight off depression and keep their spirits high. We called it "gallows humor." Hitler, of course, was the but of many jokes during the war. The best anti-Hitler humor those days was a parody on *Die Buegschaft* (The Bail), a ballad by the famous nineteenth century German poet Friedrich Schiller. In the parody, in which Hitler is substituted for the ancient Greek tyrant Dionis, poetic talent and biting humor are combined to mock the "Fuehrer" and his Nazi regime (see attachments #4 and 4A).

In May 1942, rumors started to circulate that new deportations are imminent. The word spread that the authorities are putting together lists of those who had resident permits signed by the Mayor ("Popovici permits"), but not by the Governor.

In June the rumors turned into reality. Governor Calotescu issued a secret order that all Jews with "Popovici permits" be deported. Major Marinescu, from the governor's council, was put in charge of this operation. Following the German and Soviet example, he ordered that the round-ups take place at night. In the night of June 7 to 8 gendarmes carrying bayonet-tipped rifles cordoned off the streets. Armed military units patrolled the deserted streets. In contrast to previous nights, the streets were well lit, to make any escape from the buildings more difficult. Police and military, with lists in hand, went to specified addresses to pick up the residents. Those arrested were allowed to take only what they could carry with them. Their apartments were searched, anything valuable was removed, and then they were sealed. Those arrested were taken by truck to the

Maccabi sport arena outside the city. All night truckloads of people were brought to the arena. In the early morning hours of June 8, the authorities ordered all those arrested to exchange their Romanian currency (*lei*) into the German currency used in Transnistria (*Reichskredit-Kassenscheine* or RKKS). The gendarmes checked the documents of those arrested and did body searches for hidden valuables. The people were then formed into a convoy and marched to the railroad station. Long trains of empty cattle cars were waiting. The scene was an eerie reminder of the events of October 1941. About 50 people and their belongings were squeezed into each cattle car. Once the cattle cars were full, the doors were closed, locked and sealed. Screeching and puffing, the trains left slowly the station, with their sorry load of distraught people.

The same operation was repeated on June 14 and again on June 28. Police and gendarmes carried out those arrests at night, with assistance from the military. Those arrested were taken by truck to the sport arena, and then marched to the railroad station. All those arrested had "Popovici permits." During the transport of June 28, the authorities discovered that they had not arrested a sufficient number of people to fill the trains. Major Marinescu ordered that the section of the city between the suburb of Rosch and Piteegasse be cordoned off, the Jews living in that area be arrested and taken to the train station, regardless of the kind of residence permit they possessed. The trains had to be filled to capacity.

The nights of June 1942, when between 4,000 and 5,000 people were rounded up and deported, saw many tragic events. A large number of those arrested were old people, who had been protected so far by "Popovici permits." They were barely able to walk, and were unable to carry their bags. Several old women were wearing nightgowns, since they were taken from their beds and not given time to get dressed. Some of them collapsed on the way to the railroad station and had to be carried or supported by younger people in the convoy. During the roundup on June 7, police and gendarmes entered the Jewish mental hospital and forced some 70 mental patients into the street. From the window of our apartment I could see the column of patients and their guards walking by. Most of these patients were not aware of what was happening to them. Some of them were constantly laughing, other behaved like sleepwalkers, while some had seizures and had to be restrained. The guards beat without merci those who did not obey the orders or displayed erratic behavior. To see these human

wretches being marched under police escort to the railroad station was a macabre sight. Some non-Jewish passers-by, which saw the eerie convoy of mentally ill, stopped and crossed themselves. It seemed like a picture from a horror movie.

When the police could not find those on the list, they arrested other people living at that address or in that building. Such a tragic situation occurred in our family.

After the struggle to obtain residence permits in the fall of 1941, different members of our family ended up with different permits. My parents, grandparents and Uncle Joseph's family had residence permits signed by the Governor ("Calotescu permits"), while Aunts Anna, Cilli and Jetty with her family had permits signed only by the Mayor.

When rumors started to circulate that those with "Popovici permits" will be targeted for deportation, my aunts started to prepare themselves for the journey. They purchased warm cloths and heavy boots, since these were essential to survive the harsh winter in Transnistria. They also prepared food for several days of travel. Aunt Jetty bought a warm winter coat for my cousin Gusta, as well as children boots. They packed their suitcases and waited.

The police came to pick them up during the third roundup, on June28. Bernhard, Jetty and Gusta were the first to be picked up by police. As related later to my mother by neighbors, little Gusta was bitterly crying when she and her parents were forced out from their apartment. When they stopped for a moment outside the building, the Ukrainian doorkeeper was waiting. Christian neighbors were also outside, watching in silence. The doorkeeper spit in Aunt Jetty's face, cursed her and grabbed the blanket she was holding on her arm. The blanket was to protect Gusta during the cold nights they expected to spend in open fields. Accompanied by the doorkeeper's cursing, Jetty, Bernhard and weeping Gusta had to climb into the waiting truck and were taken to the Maccabi sport arena.

When we heard about the vicious behavior of the hate filled doorkeeper, I remembered when Aunt Jetty had hired her several years earlier. My aunt had advertised in the local newspaper the opening for an apartment building doorkeeper, and a young peasant woman had applied for the job. She had moved recently to the city, but could not find work. She begged Aunt Jetty to

give her the job. My aunt hired her out of pity rather than out of conviction that she is qualified for the job. She gave her a small apartment in the building and a monthly salary. The young woman was elated when she got the job. Soon, however, Aunt Jetty found out that she was lazy and unreliable. When the building was nationalized by the Soviets and later taken over by the Romanian authorities, the doorkeeper's attitude towards my uncle and aunt changed drastically. Her initial humble, submissive attitude changed to one of arrogance and insolence. She behaved as if she would have been the mistress of the building. Now that Uncle Bernhard, Aunt Jetty, and little Gusta were totally helpless, all the venom and hatred came out from that woman's dark soul: she cursed and spit in the face of her benefactors. I remember a Latin proverb that my father often used in those days: *Homo homini lupus est* (People behave like wolves to each other). Jew-hatred fanned by the fascist regime had poisoned the soul of many people, and turned some of them into vicious animals.

In the early morning hours of June 29, police knocked at my grandparent's door. They had come to pick up Aunts Anna and Cilli. Anna was home and they took her to the waiting truck. Cilli, however, was not home. Since rumors started circulating in mid May about the possible deportation of those with "Popovici permits," Aunt Cilli stayed with us. She felt it was safer to be with us, since we had a "Calotescu permit." But she did not consider the cruelty of the Romanian police.

After searching my grandparents' apartment and not finding Aunt Cilli, the policeman turned to Uncle Joseph and said to him in a threatening voice: "If you don't tell us where your sister is, I will take you, your wife, and your child instead.' Pleading and offers of pecuniary compensation (bribes) left him unmoved. Joseph and Ruchel knew that, if deported, their one-year-old baby had no chance to survive. In despair, Uncle Joseph brought the policeman to our apartment. When Cilli saw her brother with the policeman, she burst into tears. She knew what it meant. The policeman, a tall, bony man with cold eyes and a small, black mustache, asked in a harsh voice: "Who is Cecilia Neumann?" Barely audible, Cilli replied "It's me." After verifying her documents, the policeman barked to her: "Let's go!" We were all crying. In her mid twenties, Aunt Cilli was the youngest of my aunts, and the most loved one. We embraced her and she left in tears, followed by the policeman. Uncle Joseph followed them into the hallway and slipped the policeman 100 lei not to inform his superiors

that Cilli was hiding in our place. Otherwise, we may have had to join her. We never saw Aunt Cilli again.

Many of our friends and neighbors were deported in June 1942. Members of the Weissglass family, related to my grandfather, were among them. Bertha's friend, Selma Meerbaum-Eisinger, together with her mother and stepfather, were also deported. They were in the last transport of June 28, on the same train with my family. Of the three June transports, the people in the last one were to have the most tragic fate.

Some of the survivors described later the fate of the three June transports. All trains took their live cargo to Atachi, the crossing point into Transnistria. Waiting gendarmes, using their rifle butts and cursing cleared the trains in several minutes. Many of the sick and old, pushed and kicked out from the cattle cars, left their baggage on the train. The people were herded on the shore of the Dniester, where they spent the night under the open sky. The following day they crossed the river in barges, each packed to capacity. In the process, some of the baggage was stolen or lost. Once they arrived on the Eastern shore of the river, they were submitted to a thorough search by gendarmes. Anything of value was confiscated. After spending another night under the open sky, the following day the people were sent to different camps. Most of those from the first and second transport were sent to Moghilev and Tulcin, where they found many of the Jews deported from Czernowitz in the fall of 1941. The existing Jewish communities in these locations helped the new arrivals to adapt to their new life.

The third June transport had a different destination. After crossing the Dniester at Atachi, the Jews of that transport were taken first to Cariera de Piatra ("The Quarry"), a transit camp near the river Bug. Once there, they were kept in an open field, in the rain, not far from several decrepit, empty barracks. Only after pleading and bribing the guards, were they allowed to enter the barracks. These were large, barn-type structures, with trashy dirt floors and missing doors.

After spending a week in the barracks, with barely anything to eat, they were taken to Chetvertinovka, another transit camp on the Bug. There they were quartered in the barns of several former kolhozes (collective farms). Three to four hundred people had to live in a barn, which previously served as a shelter

for cattle and pigs. Appalled by what they saw, some of the people considered escaping to other ghettos or camps, where living conditions were more humane. A few escaped to Tulcin, Obodovka, and Bershad, but most remained in Chetvertinovka.

To eke out a living, they sold to the local peasants some of the belongings they still had. A few people started working on the farms in the neighborhood, in return for a loaf of bread or some potatoes. This lasted about two months. Then, in August 1942, the German military command requested from the Romanian authorities several thousand Jews to work on different construction and other projects. The work was to be performed east of the Bug, in an area under German administration. The Romanian authorities complied with the request.

As a result of the agreement between the Romanian and German authorities, most of the Jews of Chetvertinovka were taken across the Bug near the village of Ladyzhin. Across the Bug they underwent a thorough search by SS men, who claimed to look for weapons. They did not find any weapons, but money, clothing, and linen in good condition were seized. To allay any fear and to assure that the people will comply peacefully with his orders, the German commander, SS- *Hauptsturmfuehrer* Mass, made rosy promises. He told the frightened mass of people that that they will be loaded on trucks, taken to a central labor camp, and will then be dispersed in several smaller camps. Each person will be assigned a job suitable to his or her skills. They will also receive food three times daily, and will have individual beds at night.

In despair, people were clasping at straws. They wanted to believe these promises and became more relaxed. The outlook was not too bleak. After all, the Germans were a civilized people, a people of culture and could be trusted. Soon, the empty trucks arrived to take the people to their destination. In the belief that they are going to the same central labor camp, members of the same family jumped on different trucks, wherever they found room. Only the following day did they find out that they had been taken to different camps. Parents were separated from their children, husbands from their wives. They were not to see each other again.

From Ladyzhin, the people were sent to camps in Ivangorod, Mikhailovka, Teplik, Oradovka, and others. In these camps, the people were assigned to the German construction organization Todt. Every morning the men

lined up in a convoy and were marched to the place of work, usually several miles from the camp. After arriving at their destination, they had to do hard labor 12 hours daily, building roads, bridges, and fortifications. The women were assigned to tailor shops, to repair or make new German uniforms. They slept in barracks in crowded bunk beds. The food was often spoiled and far from sufficient for the hard physical labor required. Deprived of food and overworked, an increasing number of people fell sick. The emaciated bodies fell easy prey to disease. Typhus spread in the camps and took its toll in death among young and old.

Two months after arriving in the camps, on Jom Kipur day 1942, the first *Aktion* (purge) took place. The Germans had a knack for carrying out major operations, such as deportations or mass-executions, on Jewish holidays. On Jom Kipur morning, the able-bodied men and women were marched off to work, while the old, sick and children stayed behind. In the evening, when the people returned from work, the camp was empty. Those left behind in the morning had been taken outside the camp and were shot by the SS men. They were buried in shallow mass graves. Almost everybody of those who returned had lost one of several family members. With threats of further executions, the SS men promptly suppressed the wailing and crying that was raised over the camp.

As time went by, more and more people became unable to work, due to illness and lack of food. Additional *Aktionen* took place at several months intervals. As in the Jom Kipur purge, after the able-bodied men and women were marched off to work, those weak and sick were taken outside the camp and shot. The camp population was shrinking rapidly. It became clear to those still alive that everybody will die soon from disease, emaciation or at the hand of the SS executioners.

Some people tried to escape by fleeing across the Bug. Those caught were brutally beaten and then shot. A few succeeded to escape and were able later to bear witness to the atrocities committed in the German camps.

We were unable to establish to what camp Aunts Anna, Cilli and Jetty, as well as Uncle Bernhard and Cousin Gusta were taken. We only know that they were in the third transport of June 1942, and that most people from that transport ended up across the Bug, under German administration. One camp survivor, who knew Aunt Cilli and was able to escape across the Bug, returned

later to Czernowitz and told us that Cilli was still alive in the summer of1943. She probably died in an *Aktion* later that year. The rest of the family probably perished earlier, in1942.

Selma Meerbaum-Eisinger was sent to the Mikhailovka camp and died of typhus in December 1942. This was reported in the diary of the Jewish painter Arnold Daghani, who was in the same camp with her. He was able to escape over the Bug and published his diary after the war. Another survivor of that camp was able to save Selma's poems. They were published under the title *Bluetenlese* after the war, in Germany and Israel.

In the summer of 1942, my parents decided that it is time to find for me a place to work and earn some money. Such work would help out the family and keep me busy. I ended up working in a lumberyard. I carried studs from one place to another, pushed carts loaded with wooden boards, and helped grown-ups with their work at the lumberyard. Needless to say, the earnings amounted to a pittance. The work was physically demanding, and I had difficulties with some of my coworkers. There were a few older boys working there, mostly Ukrainians. They made a sport of hurting and harassing me: they hit me "by accident" with wooden boards, they dropped "by accident" wooden logs on my feet, always laughing after the "accident" happened. One day, while I was carrying a heavy load of wooden logs, one of the boys pushed his elbow into my ribs. I dropped the logs on my feet and started crying, in pain. An older, white-haired worker, who saw what happened, approached the boy that hit me, slapped him hard in the face, and said something to him in a harsh tone. After that incident, the harassment diminished, but did not stop completely.

After work, at home, I had to do some studying with my sister. Often I was tired and did not feel like solving math problems or conjugating French verbs. But my sister would not have it otherwise, and trying to contradict her would have been useless anyway. Once she had her mind made up, no mortal could have changed it.

After working for about two months in the lumberyard, a change occurred in my activities. In early September, Mother met in the market Moishe Weissglass, a cousin of my grandfather. He was a locksmith and had a small shop in the basement of an old building in the Jewish quarter. Mother told him about my work in the lumberyard and about the harassment I was exposed to.

Mr. Weissglass said that he needed some help in his shop, and asked my mother if she would let me be an apprentice in his shop. He promised to teach me the skill of a locksmith and also to pay me a small salary. Mother was pleased with the offer and accepted it. She felt that it would be better for me to work with a relative and learn a new skill, rather than do strenuous physical work in the lumberyard in a hostile environment. Three days later I left the lumberyard and became a locksmith apprentice.

Mr. Weissglass was a good-natured, friendly elderly man with blue, watery eyes, a short, white goatee, and an endless supply of jokes. He always seemed content, regardless of circumstances. In his poorly lit locksmith shop he had a worn-out workbench with a vice mounted at its end. Next to it stood a wooden, scratched cabinet with numerous drawers that contained a variety of tools: hammers, pliers, wrenches, files of different shapes, a hand drill, a soldering iron, solder, a variety of screwdrivers, a hacksaw, and different hacksaw blades. In the bottom drawer were various old locks and lock components, such as latches, bolts, knobs and handles. In a corner of the room was a bundle of iron rods and bars that were used for making keys. A single electric bulb was hanging from the ceiling, and the floor was covered with wooden planks. There were two small dirty windows close to the ceiling, at the level of the sidewalk, which allowed only a few anemic rays of light to enter the room. The air in the shop was musty and stale.

In the first week Mr. Weissglass taught me how to use each tool properly and without hurting myself. He taught me how to mount a blade on a hacksaw, how to cut an iron rod with the hacksaw without cutting off my fingers, and how to use a hammer without slamming it on my fingernails. I learned how to use a hand drill without perforating some part of my body, and how to use a soldering iron without burning my cloths or myself. Mr. Weissglass was very patient with me, and kept a close eye on me. Whenever I botched the job assigned, he corrected me. He always kept his cool, regardless how often I made mistakes, cut a deep groove in the workbench with the hacksaw, or cut my finger. Although by the end of the first week I had bandages on my left thumb and forefinger, I knew how to handle most of the tools.

In the following days I learned how to make a door key. In those days, keys were about four inches long and quite heavy. They had a ring-shaped handle at one end and a dented part at the other. I learned how to cut the iron

rod into four-inch-long pieces, how to solder the ring-shaped handle to the iron rod, how to attach a small, flat square of metal at the other end, and how to cut the necessary notches into the metal square with hacksaw and file. The first keys I made looked nice, but were not able to lock any doors. When I finally made the first key that was able to open and lock a door, I felt very proud.

I started to like my work in the shop, and I was on the way of becoming a good locksmith. My parents, however, had other plans for me. In early fall, when the improvised school for Jewish children started again, my parents decided that I should go back to school. After having worked for several weeks as a locksmith, I said good-bye to Mr. Weissglass and returned to school to study algebra, physics, chemistry, and French.

Toward the end of 1942 the news from the Eastern front was not as bleak as earlier in the year. True, the Germans had reached the Volga near Stalingrad, German panzer columns had penetrated into the Caucasus Mountains and had occupied the oilfields of Grozny. Bloody fighting in and around Stalingrad continued, however, in spite of German claims that the ruined city had almost been conquered. In November 1942, the Soviets started a powerful counter-offensive. The German and Romanian news agencies reported "strong enemy attacks," "huge enemy losses," "heavy defensive battles" in the Middle Don region. The triumphant tone of previous military reports gave way to a restrained, almost somber tone. It became clear that an enormous battle was in progress and that Hitler's armies were on the defensive. In December the newspapers started to use the terms "mobile defense" and "elastic defense" when describing the fighting on the Middle Don and in the Caucasus. From people who listened to BBC radio we found out that "mobile" or "elastic defense" were euphemisms used by the OKW (High Command of the Wehrmacht) to report the retreat of German forces. From the same radio broadcasts we learned that the Red Army had broken through enemy lines and trapped the German 6$^{th}$ Army and several Romanian divisions in and around Stalingrad. German attempts to free the encircled forces failed. After several weeks of bloody, savage fighting in and around Stalingrad, the remnants of the German 6$^{th}$ Army surrendered to the Red Army at the end of January 1943. The Romanians also suffered heavy losses. The Romanian Third Army that eighteen months earlier

had massacred defenseless Jews in the towns and villages of Northern Bukovina paid a heavy price in blood on the battlefields of Stalingrad.

Finally, we had good news from the front! The German army had been beaten at Stalingrad! After all, the army of the "master race" was not invincible, as many had been inclined to believe. The Romanian fascists had also been taught a lesson. Our spirits soared. The possibility that Germany can be defeated came closer to reality. Jews who met on the street talked with excitement about the Russian victory. For the Jews living under the boot of the oppressor, it was the first ray of hope after long years of darkness. As it turned out, the battle of Stalingrad was indeed the turning point of the war on the Eastern front.

The defeat at Stalingrad brought also changes in the attitude of the Romanian authorities. They began to realize that winning the war against the Soviet Union was far from certain. To protect themselves, the government decided to moderate its policies toward the Jews. Further deportations of Jews were suspended. Anti-Jewish legislation was not anymore as strictly enforced as in the past. For the Jews of Czernowitz, it became easier to buy food and fuel. It also became easier to send packages and money to the deportees in Transnistria. Early in 1943, the boot of the oppressor on the neck of the Jewish community was not as heavy anymore. Our troubles, however, were far from over.

While the year 1943 started out on an optimistic note, in the spring of that year we were shocked by Bertha's arrest. It happened during a meeting of the Bethar organization in the private home of one of its members. The meeting was attended by Bertha and by about a dozen other young people, and was led by Shmuel Schmidt. Ganzweich and Moschkowitz were also present. The Ukrainian neighbors had noticed the gathering of a larger number of Jews, and informed police that a communist meeting took place in the building. Police cordoned off the building, broke down the locked door and arrested the whole group. We found out about Bertha's arrest from a neighbor who had witnessed the event. My parents rushed to the police station to inquire about my sister and were told that Bertha and the rest of the group have been arrested for communist activity.

It was a heavy blow for the whole family. Long prison terms or deportation of those arrested was a real possibility. For Schmidt, Ganzweich and Moschkowitz, who were illegally in the country, there was also the threat of being sent back to Poland. That would have meant certain death for them. The parents of the arrested teenagers, including my parents, appealed to the leadership of the Bethar and to the Jewish Council for help. Since Bethar was a right-wing Zionist organization, its leaders had connections at the Mayor's office and at Police Headquarters. The Jewish Council also had connections at the Mayor's office. They intervened in behalf of those arrested. After several days of detention and interrogation, and after a substantial amount of money changed hands, the girls in the group, including Bertha, were released. No proof of subversive activity was found. The leaders of the group, Schmidt, Ganzweich and Moskowitz, as well as the other arrested men, had to spend several weeks in jail and, after another substantial bribe, they were finally released. Again, the notorious corruption of the Romanian authorities had a silver lining.

Throughout 1943 the news from the front was very encouraging. After the battle of Stalingrad, the Red Army expanded its offensive along the entire front. In the process, it liberated from German occupation large areas of the country. Naturally, the reports issued by the German High Command (OKW) never admitted the success of Soviet forces. The reports from the Eastern front stated that German troops were in the process of "straightening out" the front line, or of

"detaching themselves from the enemy", euphemisms used to cover up withdrawal and defeat. But we knew from BBC radio reports that the Germans had suffered a series of defeats. In the summer of 1943 we heard that the largest tank battle of the war was taking place in the Kursk region. The Germans lost the battle, along with thousands of tanks. From then on they were unable to mount any major offensive and were in general retreat.

Towards the end of 1943 and early in 1944, the front moved closer to Transnistria. Partisan activity in the area increased. The Romanian troops were not eager to capture the partisans, since they realized that the war was lost. More and more often the partisans came boldly into villages, demanding food from the peasants, not afraid of being arrested. At night, they frequently ambushed Romanian patrols, but did not shoot them. They only asked the soldiers if their officer treated them well. If the answer was "no," they shot the officer. But in most instances they just disarmed the ambushed patrol and disappeared in the night with their weapons. With the German troops across the Bug the situation was different. German trains loaded with war material were derailed or blown up. Nazi officers and soldiers perished in railway "accidents." Those Nazis who survived the train disasters and tried to walk or crawl away from the wrecked train were shot dead at close range by the partisans. German trucks packed with Nazi soldiers were attacked with grenades and raked with machine gun fire. Isolated German soldiers were stabbed or shot dead from behind a house or a tree. The Germans responded in kind. Any partisan captured by the Germans was hanged or shot, often after being tortured. Some partisans were hanged in the village square, as a deterrent to the rest of the population. The partisans, in turn, did not take any German prisoners. They shot them. There was no mercy shown on either side.

As the front moved closer, the possibility that German troops may occupy Transnistria became very real. Should that occur, the Jewish population could face total annihilation. The Jewish leadership in Bucharest began intense negotiations with the government to have the deportees returned, starting with the orphaned children. Considering the situation on the front, this time the Romanian government was much more willing to listen to the pleas of the Jewish leaders. While the negotiations went on, more packages of food and clothing, as well as money, were sent by the Jewish community of Bucharest to the ghettoes

and camps of Transnistria. No food or clothing, however, could reach those who were still alive in the camps east of the Bug, under German administration. Those deportees were doomed to total annihilation.

In 1943, tragedy hit Uncle Joseph's family. His two-year old boy, Eli, started complaining about pain in the belly region. The pain got worst by the hour, and the child started to have a high fever. Uncle Joseph called Dr. Noe, a well-known pediatrician in Czernowitz. The doctor examined the child and concluded that the pain is due to a cramp in the child's leg. He recommended physical exercises, and had the child crawl on the floor. While being forced to crawl, the child kept crying in pain, and the fever kept rising. Aunt Ruchel wrapped the child in wet bed sheets, but neither the fever nor the pain subsided. A young medical student, who lived in the same building, heard Eli cry, knocked at my uncle's door, and inquired why the child is crying. When Uncle Joseph told him what the doctor had diagnosed, the student asked permission to examine the child. My uncle was glad to have a second opinion. After examining the child, the student concluded that Eli has an infected appendix. He recommended that the physical exercises are stopped, and that the child should be taken immediately to the hospital to have the appendix removed. Uncle Joseph followed the advice and took the child to the hospital. When the doctors opened the child's belly, it was too late. The appendix was ruptured and the body was already infected. The rupture had been caused by the physical exercises forced upon the child. Eli could not be saved. Shortly afterwards, the child died.

The loss of Eli was a terrible blow for Uncle Joseph and Aunt Ruchel. He was their only child, and they adored him. They had been able to protect the child from deportation, but had not been able to protect him from an incompetent doctor. Ruchel had a nervous breakdown, from which she never recovered completely.

In 1944, as a result of the Soviet winter offensive, the front came close to Bukovina. The Jewish population of Czernowitz, as well as that of Transnistria, had mixed feelings about those events, and looked with apprehension at the developments on the front. Liberation appeared at hand, and years of suffering and oppression may soon come to an end. The proximity of the front, however,

could also mean fighting and destruction in the city, more German troops in the area, and the imposition of German military rule. From BBC radio reports we knew that during their retreat on the Eastern front the Germans used a scorched earth policy. They destroyed most cities and villages before abandoning them to the advancing Soviet armies. Moreover, it was a real possibility that, once under German rule, those Jews who have survived so far would be liquidated by the SS. Both Jews and Gentiles watched the military development with trepidation. Uncertainty hovered over the city like a dark, threatening cloud.

It was at that time that we had an unexpected visitor. Mother was busy in the kitchen and I was reading one of Jules Verne's adventure novels, when we heard a knock at the door. Since Father was in bed with pain in his legs, Mother and I went to see who was at the door. When Mother opened the door, we both froze. In front of us was standing a German soldier in his green uniform, rifle hanging from his shoulder. We had no idea that German troops had arrived in the city, and surely did not expect them at our door. The soldier greeted us and asked in a fairly polite tone if he could spend the night in our apartment. It would be just for one night, he said. Mother turned white like a sheet of paper, but quickly recovered from her initial shock. She had always been able to keep her cool, under any circumstances. "We are Jews" said my mother, "but you are welcome to stay in our apartment." In the situation we found ourselves, to refuse the soldier's request would have been sheer lunacy. Nor could we deny that we were Jews. Once he moved in, he would have found out anyway. "You are Jews?" he asked incredulous. He did not expect to find any Jews alive, especially Jews who speak fluently German. "Yes sir, we are Jews," replied my mother. She had taken a big risk by telling him the truth, not knowing what would follow. Will he push us aside end enter our apartment? Will he shoot us? "We have orders not to stay in Jewish homes," said the soldier. He paused, then added slowly: "It will be a tragic chapter in the history of mankind what Germany has done to the Jews." He turned around and left. Mother and I gave a deep sigh of relief. It was a frightening experience, and we have been very lucky. He could have done with us whatever he wanted, he could have robbed us or shot us. Instead, he expressed regret for what the Germans have done to the Jews. Having fought on the Eastern front, he obviously knew much more than we did about the crimes perpetrated by the Nazis, crimes we learned about only after the war. We

realized that there still were decent people in the German army, people who felt embarrassed and ashamed by what their countrymen had done and were doing to the Jews.

In March 1944, the news spread that BBC radio had reported a major breakthrough by the Red Army. The radio report also said that on the Southern front, that included our area, the Germans were retreating rapidly to avoid being cut off by the advancing Soviets. At the end of March, German supply convoys started to roll through the city, moving south, away from the front. From behind drawn curtains I could see the columns of horse-drawn wagons filled to the top and covered with large, khaki canvas sheets. It was strange to see that the German army, in spite of the high level of mechanization, still used large numbers of horses in its supply convoys. For three days and nights the columns rumbled through the city, along the street Russischegasse and towards the Tsetsina woods. A long column of mud-splattered military trucks, packed with grim-faced German soldiers followed the supply convoys. Some of the trucks pulled artillery pieces behind them. The trucks raced through the city and disappeared in a cloud of dust. After the columns passed, several powerful explosions could be heard: the Germans were blowing up the bridges over the Prut. Then, an eerie silence settled over the city.

The next day, on March 28, the first Russian patrols entered the city. In their green-gray helmets and gray military greatcoats, submachine guns at the ready, they advanced cautiously through the deserted streets. Moving close to the building walls in groups of three or four, they were eyeing rooftops and windows, looking for snipers. Isolated German stragglers, who were still on the streets, were cut down with short bursts of submachine guns. One of these stragglers, apparently drunk, was shot while he tried to hide or break into our building. He lay in a pool of blood on the sidewalk, face down, until our doorman dragged him away. Later in the day, Russian infantry entered the city on olive-green Jeeps and Studebaker trucks. We had been liberated.

Our city and its inhabitants had been lucky. The Germans abandoned the city without a fight, and in their hasty retreat had no time to destroy it. Only several fuel depots were burning, the railroad station and the airport were heavily damaged, but the city and its inhabitants were safe. In the following weeks, the

front moved further west and south, away from the city. At the same time, the Red Army occupied Transnistria and the northern part of Romania. The surviving Jews of the ghettoes and camps of Transnistria, nearly half of those deported, were liberated.

The survivors slowly began returning to their former homes. It was a sorry lot. Emaciated from starvation and ravaged by disease, they were too weak to enjoy their freedom. Suffering was mirrored on their gaunt faces, in their slow, hesitant movements, and in the gaze of their sad, mournful eyes. Dressed in rags and carrying their few belongings in small bundles, they came on foot, in horse-drawn wagons, and in empty Russian military trucks that picked them up on the road.

Some of the deportees started returning even before the arrival of the Red Army. Early in 1944, as the front moved closer to Transnistria, Antonescu issued an order allowing those deported to return to their place of origin. He realized that the war was lost and hoped to save himself by showing some last-moment good will towards those he had cruelly persecuted.

We all waited for our relatives to return from Transnistria. We had not heard from them since they were deported in the summer of 1942. Mother waited for her three sisters, for uncle Bernhard and for my cousin Gusta. I was especially eager to meet Gusta again, to hear her carefree laughter and to see her dark, sparkling eyes. Father waited for his relatives that have been deported from Suceava. But nobody came. Later we found out that in the camps across the Bug, where my mother's sisters had been sent, before their retreat the Germans murdered those who did not perish from disease or during previous German *Aktionen*. Only a handful of people was able to escape across the Bug under cover of darkness, and survived.

The realization that our relatives deported two years earlier were no more alive began slowly to sink in. The glimmer of hope that someday they may knock at the door, dressed in rags but alive, had been extinguished. I realized that never again will I hear Gusta's crystalline, carefree laughter or see her black, curly hair. That Aunt Cilli will never again bring me an orange when I am sick. Hitler's executioners in collusion with Antonescu's underlings had murdered them, and dumped them in some unmarked mass grave. Why have they been murdered? They have never done anything that could harm Germany or

Romania. Was Aunt Cilli, Aunt Jetty or Aunt Anna a threat to the Third Reich? Was little Gusta such a threat? There was no answer, there was no explanation of the murder of these defenseless and innocent people.

At night, alone in bed, I kept thinking about little Gusta and crying. I tried to imagine how she died. Did she die from hunger because she did not have a crust of bread that would have kept her alive? Did she freeze to dead because she did not have the blanket that the cruel housekeeper had grabbed from her mother's arm? Or was it a bullet from the pistol of an SS-man that had pierced her little heart? I did not know the answer. I only realized, again, how much cruelty and injustice there was in the world I lived in.

The draft-age Jewish men liberated by the Soviets in Transnistria, although undernourished and emaciated, were promptly drafted into the Red Army. They could not return home. After a few weeks of training, a long train packed with these draftees was sent to the front in Eastern Prussia. On the way to the front, however, near the city of Minsk, German bombers attacked the train. Racked with machine-gun fire and ripped apart by shrapnel from exploding bombs, hundreds of draftees were killed or maimed. Sami, one of Bertha's friends and former member of Hashomer Hatsair, was on that train and was seriously wounded. He was pulled out from the wreckage, barely alive. After being treated in a military hospital, he was sent back to Czernowitz with both legs missing. He was eighteen years old.

Now that Czernowitz was again under Red Army control and the front had moved away from the city, the Soviets reinstated civil administration. A series of orders were issued regarding blackouts, fuel and food rationing. A strict curfew was imposed. The city's inhabitants had to register with the civil authorities to receive new internal passports and food-rationing stamps. Draft-age men had to register with the military authorities.

Since Czernowitz was one of the few cities in the western Soviet Union that had not been destroyed by war, it attracted large numbers of Soviet civilians. People who before the war lived in Bessarabia, in western Ukraine, or in southern Poland came to settle in Czernowitz. Soon Russians and Ukrainians occupied every empty house and apartment abandoned by the fleeing

Romanians. Many of the Jews returning from Transnistria found their apartments already occupied by Soviet civilians or military.

The Soviet authorities looked with suspicion at the local population. This was a population that has stayed under enemy occupation for almost three years and could not be completely trusted. The Soviet newcomers treated the *mestnyie* (locals) with a mixture of suspicion and condescension. Coming from totally devastated areas, the newcomers felt also a grudge toward those who have been able to live throughout the war in their homes and apartments.

Since Bertha had been active in an antifascist group, she was hired as a clerk by the newly established Soviet administration. One of the tasks of the new administration was to recruit a labor force for the factories and coal mines in the industrial region of the Ukraine. Most factory workers and coal miners had been drafted into the army and there was a serious shortage of manpower.

The Soviets had effective methods to fill the quota of required manpower. Some of the men that came to the authorities to obtain new documents were detained. Other men were picked up on the streets by roaming patrols. Those detained were put under military guard and shipped eastward by train.

The authorities also needed manpower locally. The retreating German and Romanian troops had left behind ammunition and military equipment scattered in barracks, school buildings, warehouses, and government buildings. These materials had to be collected, sorted and turned over to the authorities. Furthermore, land mines had to be removed from a large area near the Tsetsina woods that had been mined by the retreating Germans. The task to do the job fell to the city's teenagers. Fifteen and sixteen year old boys had to collect the scattered ammunition and remove the land mines. The boys to do this job were picked up at random on the streets. I was one of them.

On a sunny morning in early April, I decided to go to my friend, Martin Zwick, to play a game of chess. I was cheerful and carefree. Since we had been liberated, I did not have to wear the yellow star anymore, did not fear to be beaten up by hoodlums, and, I thought, did not have to fear of being arrested. Well, on that last point I was mistaken. When I passed a military patrol, one of the men in uniform stopped me. "How old are you?" he wanted to know. "Fifteen," I replied. "Come with us," he said brusquely. They took me to a building with a military guard at the entrance. It was the local Soviet administration building. I

was led to a large room with wooden benches placed along the whitewashed walls and a picture of Josef Stalin in military uniform hanging on the wall across the windows. There where about two dozen teenagers about my age, sitting on benches or on the floor. Periodically the door opened and more teenagers were brought in. They had been picked up on the street and brought to this room. None of us had any idea why we were there. By the end of the day, a Soviet officer came in and gave a brief speech. "The Motherland," he said, "needs your help in the struggle against the fascist enemy. Your assignment will be to collect shells, hand grenades, small arms and different explosives scattered throughout the city and cart them to collection centers." He then gave us the location of the collection centers. The officer told us that we would also have to find and disarm land mines planted by the fascists. Before carrying out these tasks, we will be instructed how to proceed. Until the task is completed, we will stay in the Soviet administration building.

We spent the night sleeping on straw mattresses on the floor. The next day was a day of instruction. We were shown and taught how to handle, pack and store different types of shells, hand grenades, rifles, and other military equipment. The instructor emphasized especially what not to do: we should not throw, play with or pull the safety pin of the egg-shaped, fragmentation hand grenades; we should not pull the string coming out of the wooden handle of the German hand grenades; and we should never drop or hit an artillery shell on its head. We were also taught about different types of land mines (anti-personnel, anti-tank mines), how to find them with mine detectors and how to deactivate them. The lecture was followed by practical instructions, when we learned how to handle a land mine detector and different land mines. The instructor concluded the lesson, with a warning: "There is no room for error when carrying out this assignment. One mistake, and you lose a leg or you are blown to pieces". Such a warning really caught our attention.

For several days I collected German grenades and shells left behind in schools and official buildings, where German troops had been briefly quartered during their retreat. I put them in crates and with other boys took them to the collection center. I was quite excited doing this job and felt proud of being given such an important assignment. How often was a youngster like me given the

chance to handle so many live hand grenades and artillery shells? I worked with enthusiasm and dedication. We completed our assignment in three days.

After we completed the collection of weapons, we were told that next we will participate in a land mine clearing operation. The next day I was one of several boys taken by truck to a field near the Tsetsina woods. The instructor who accompanied our group told us that the field had been mined by enemy troops before their retreat. Those were anti-personnel land mines, and our task was to find and deactivate the buried mines. We were divided into teams of two. In each team, one youngster had to detect the mines, while the other one had to deactivate them. I had to work with sixteen-year-old Rudi, a lanky lad with a bevy of chestnut-brown hair, lively green eyes, and freckles sprinkled on his face. My task was to find the mines, while Rudi's task was to deactivate them. Then the instructor handed me a land mine detector. I already knew how the mine detector worked. When the hand-held detector came close to a buried land mine, the metallic part of the mine generated a signal in the detector. The signal was transmitted to a headphone worn by the person holding the detector.

The instructor assigned to each team a stretch of the field, reminded us again of the danger involved in this mission, and wished us good luck. Then we went to work. The area assigned to Rudi and me was a rectangular piece of land, about thirty meters long and several meters wide. The soil was partly covered with grass and partly bare. I started my work at one end of the rectangle, sweeping slowly the detector plate from side to side over the ground, while listening intently for a signal. I was tense like a tight cord, and started to perspire. I knew that a mistake might cost me a foot or even my life. I tried to concentrate fully on the task ahead, watching the ground and listening for a signal. I had searched about one third of my territory when suddenly I got a signal. I stopped instantaneously. My heart was pounding and I felt my mouth very dry. I called out to Rudi and told him that I have found a mine. He walked over slowly, a worrisome look on his face. He obviously was not thrilled to dig up land mines. Still, when he got next to me, he went down on his knees, and started scraping the soil carefully over the spot I indicated to him. He pushed aside cautiously the loose soil with his bare hands. In the mean time I moved away to a safe distance. If the thing exploded, it was no point to kill both of us. After about five minutes that seemed to me an eternity, Rudi removed slowly from the ground the object

that generated the signal. We stared at the object full of surprise. It was not a mine, but an old, rusty horseshoe. My detector had spotted a piece of metal in the ground and had generated a false alarm! Rudi and I had a brief, nervous laugh. The land mine detector obviously could not differentiate between a metallic mine component and an ordinary piece of metal. But the work had to go on. I picked up again the land mine detector and resumed my work. When I came close to the end of the field, I got again a signal. This time I was less excited. I called Rudi and we started to joke. Did I discover another worthless piece of metal, or was it perhaps a gold treasure? But this time what we found was no joke, it was the real thing. Slowly, very carefully, Rudi deactivated and pulled out from the ground an anti-personnel land mine. It was a German "bouncing" mine. By stepping on such a mine, a spring would throw a shell into the air and would explode, causing death and mayhem. Just the thought that I could have stepped on such a mine made a chill go down my spine. So far, I thought, I have been very lucky.

Another team of boys that searched for mines found and deactivated two anti-personnel land mines. There were no mishaps. At the end of the day, when we returned to our quarters, we talked with excitement about the events of the day. We were laughing about the horseshoe we found, but we all knew that our precarious assignment was no laughing matter. We were relieved to be alive, and proud of our accomplishments.

The next morning I was getting ready for another day of land mine clearing, when I had a surprise. One of Bertha's friends, Silva, also a former member of the anti-fascist group, worked in the same building where I was quartered. She had seen me and informed my parents about my whereabouts and about my assignment. My parents were desperate since they did not know where I had disappeared. When they found out where I was and what I was doing, they implored Silva to do whatever she can to have me released. They realized the danger I was in, and Silva promised to do her best. She talked to the commander of my group and tried to convince him to release me, claiming that I was too young and too weak to clear mines. Indeed, at that time I was very skinny and looked more like a twelve-year-old. Since Silva had a key position in the city administration, the commander reluctantly agreed. Besides, the mine

clearing operation did not require as many people as the weapons collection. The commander told me to go home.

I had mixed feelings about the commander's decision. I would have liked to find more "bouncing" land mines, to feel the thrill of detecting and making harmless these small containers of death. It was much more exciting than playing chess or playing ball. I was doing the job of a man. But deep down I also felt some trepidation and anxiety. Branded in my mind were the words of my instructor: "If you do make a mistake it will be your last one." The possibility of loosing limb or life was, mildly put, not very appealing. However, my mixed feelings on this matter were irrelevant. Not surprisingly, my parents had made up their mind on this subject, and so had the commander. I went home, knowing that I had done something important: that I had made my contribution, albeit a small one, in the fight against the Nazis.

More excitement was in store for us. In late May, while walking on the street, Shmuel was picked up by a military patrol. He was taken to a collection center, together with dozens of other men caught in a dragnet set up by the authorities. The next day, those arrested were lined up in a convoy and marched under military escort to the railroad station. They were supposed to be shipped to the industrial Donetz region in the Ukraine, to work in plants and coal mines.

Bertha found out about Shmuel's arrest from his friend Moschkowitz. He came over to our house very agitated and told my sister that Shmuel had left in the morning and had not returned home. Through her connections with the authorities, Bertha found out where Shmuel was detained. She also learned that he was to be shipped out the following day. Bertha knew that once he was sent far away into Russia, she was not likely to see Shmuel so soon, if ever. They had planned to go together to Palestine and to get married. Now that plan was threatened.

Bertha was not a person to remain passive in such a situation. During the night she came up with a plan. Next morning, as the column of those arrested was marched under military escort to the railroad station, Bertha approached the convoy and started talking to Shmuel. She was wearing the badge that identified her as an employee of the Soviet authorities. While talking to each other, Bertha and Shmuel slowed their pace until they were at the end of the convoy. The

soldiers guarding the rear of the convoy saw my sister's badge and decided to ignore the two slow-walking people. After the column turned a street corner, Bertha and Shmuel, who had fallen behind, scurried through an open door into an apartment building. After awhile, they left the building and rushed home.

They knew that Shmuel's disappearance will be discovered, and that the authorities will be looking for him. He had to leave town. Bertha decided to join him. His two friends, Moschkowitz and Ganzweich, also decided to join him. My parents had strong misgivings about Bertha leaving home into the unknown, but as usually, she was firm in her decision. Bertha and Shmuel decided to move closer to the front, where there was no civilian administration. Under those conditions, it was less likely that Shmuel will be identified and apprehended. As soon as the Red Army occupied the rest of Romania, they planned to go to Bucharest. From there, with the help of the Zionist Organization of Romania, they were hoping to reach Palestine.

Bertha filled her backpack with clothing and food, put on hiking pants, a sport jacket and hiking boots, embraced us, and said goodbye. It was an emotional farewell. Mother cried and even my father, who rarely showed emotions, had tears in his eyes. I also cried. We all knew that the future was uncertain, that the war was still going on, and that the world was still a very dangerous place. We also knew that we would not see Bertha for a long time. For Bertha, this was only the beginning of a long and arduous journey.

In the fall of 1944 I went back to school. This time I did it not in hiding, in the private home of a teacher, but in a regular, public school. Although I graduated from the 6$^{th}$ grade in the spring of 1941 under the Soviets, I was now accepted into the 9$^{th}$ grade, due to my private studies at home between 1941 and 1944. As in 1940, the Soviets set up Russian, Ukrainian, and Yiddish schools. My parents sent me to the Yiddish school No. 18, since the school had very capable, local teachers. Most of the teachers were Jewish, some from Bukovina and others from Bessarabia. Among those I admired the most was professor Gininger, for Yiddish language and literature. Gershon and Hushky Segal, who taught physics and math, respectively, were also among my preferred teachers. Especially the males in our school liked Bella Gruenberg, who taught Russian literature. She was a dark-eyed, very attractive, young women from Bessarabia,

with a charming smile and feminine demeanor. Many of the male professors had a crush on her, and even we school boys were looking forward to have class with her. Our class had two non-Jewish teachers: a middle-aged, homely woman from Kiev for Ukrainian language and literature, and a Soviet lieutenant as military instructor. The lieutenant was a young Russian who had been wounded in the war and was dragging his left foot when he walked. Unfit for the army, he became a military instructor in our school.

Some of the teachers were Party members and tried to show it at every occasion. This was the case with our history teacher, Mrs. Taback, who never missed an opportunity to praise the Soviet Union and its leader, Joseph Stalin. We never found out if she was indeed a dedicated communist or if she just wanted to give that impression. She never smiled, never joked, and had always a stern face. She also taught us the ideological course, the Marxist theories about economics and society. With anger in her voice she talked about the exploitation of the working people in the capitalistic countries, about the oppression of the colonial people. Then, with a voice vibrating with enthusiasm, she told us about the freedom all working people have in the Soviet Union under the genial leadership of the great Joseph Stalin. She described the future communist society in rosy colors, as a classless society where private property will be abolished. Everything will be shared with the collective. General happiness will be a mark of that society.

The ideological lectures were followed by discussions that sometimes took a strange turn. One youngster wanted to know if in a collectivist society he would be allowed to keep his penknife. Another one wanted to know if a man who has a wife or girl friend would have to share her with his comrades. That question caused a lot of giggling in the classroom, but the teacher did not smile. “A wife or a girl friend are not objects or property” replied the teacher with a stern voice. Then she added with a straight face: “They would share only by mutual consent.” Needless to say that this aspect of the future communist society became an animated and amusing topic of conversation among us boys during the break.

Most of the teachers avoided politics in their interaction with the students. The classes with Gininger and Hushky Segal were especially interesting. Those teachers had a wide horizon of knowledge that went far beyond the subject they

were supposed to teach. In addition to the regular subjects they taught us about the great writers and poets of the universal literature, about great philosophers, about Jewish theatre, and about famous painters. I am indebted to these great teachers for stimulating my intellectual curiosity for literature, philosophy and the arts at that early stage in my life. The interest in these subjects has stayed with me during my adult life.

In the class of military instructions we learned about rifles, submachine guns and handguns. We learned how to take them apart and how to put them together. How to clean them, load them and fire them at a target. We learned how to read a map and how to use it in conjunction with a compass. We also had classes in the field, where we had to crawl in the dirt with loaded rifle between a variety of obstacles, such as bushes, ditches, and discarded tires, and to fire at a target. The lieutenant was good-natured and was never too strict with us. We often saw that he had pain in his wounded leg, but was kind to us. His experience on the front had taught him to take a more philosophical approach to life.

We learned several patriotic war songs in Russian. Among them was the rousing battle song that the Red Army soldiers used to sing in those days called *The Holy War.* The following is the first stanza of that song:

| | |
|---|---|
| *Vstahvay strannah ogromnayah* | O rise, you mighty country |
| *Vstavay nah smertnyi boy,* | O rise, for the deadly battle, |
| *S fashystoy silloy teomnoyuh* | Against the dark forces of fascism |
| *S proklyatoyuh ordoy...* | Against those accursed hordes... |

In my spare time I went often to the movies. We had no radio at home (we had turned over our radio to the Soviet authorities at the beginning of the war), and seeing a movie was an entertainment I enjoyed. Some were historical movies from Russia's past, such as Eisenstein's "Alexander Nevsky," a Russian prince who defended his country against the attack by German knights in the 13th century. Most of the movies, however, were patriotic war movies that glorified the Russian people in their struggle against the Nazi invaders. The films showed the heroism of the Red Army fighters and the barbaric behavior of the enemy.

Occasionally, pro-Russian American movies, such as "Mission to Moscow" and "Song of Russia" were also shown.

Newsreels usually preceded the movies. They showed images from the front, from factories producing war materiel for the front, and from the liberated territories devastated by the retreating German armies. From those newsreels I learned for the first time about the immense destruction caused by the Germans in occupied Soviet Russia. Occasionally they showed scenes from North Africa, where British troops under Montgomery's command fought Rommel's panzer in the desert. In the summer of 1944 one of the newsreels showed 57,000 German prisoners of war marched through the Russian capital with their generals in the lead. What a miserable lot they were! An endless column of dejected, dirty, tired, unkempt, hollow-faced individuals, moving slowly in their tattered field-gray uniforms over the pavement of Gorky Street in central Moscow. The column was followed by half a dozen sanitation trucks that washed the street clean—a sanitary as well as a symbolic act. How different these prisoners were from the athletic, well-groomed, well-dressed and polished Nazi officers and soldiers that strutted around in Czernowitz in the summer of 1941. Gone was their haughty arrogance, their air of superiority, their "supermen" attitude. As prisoners, they did not look different from the Russian prisoners of war shown in the Nazi magazines "Signal" and "Das Reich." The captive German "supermen" were now a lot as wretched as the captive Russian "subhuman." I realized how easy it is to put man in circumstances that make him appear subhuman. These images reminded me also of the anti-Semitic pictures I had seen in German and Romanian magazines, showing dirty, raggedy Jews in the ghettoes of Poland or Transnistria, pictures designed to show the inferiority of these people and to generate contempt for them. The captive Germans did not look much better.

The Yiddish theatre was reopened in the fall. Artists from the Yiddish theatre of Kiev, as well as local artists, started performing on a regular basis. I was a regular visitor at the theatre, since actors and acting had attracted me from an early age. Tickets were cheap and when the theatre was not full, teenagers could enter without tickets. The theatre presented plays by Yiddish playwrights, such as Sholem Alehem, Itzhak Peretz, and Soviet-Yiddish writers. Plays by Chechov, Gogol, and other Russian classics were also performed. Naturally,

there were also contemporary plays, showing the barbaric behavior of the Nazis and the struggle against fascism. I remember how in one of those plays, dealing with the struggle of Jewish partisans against the Nazis, the director put on the curtain the motto *Am Yisrael Chai*! (The Jewish people live!). Several months later he was arrested and accused of spreading Jewish nationalist propaganda. He was convicted to spend 10 years in a labor camp.

As a teenager I was interested in sport. I often played soccer with other boys in the schoolyard or on an open field. I was good as goalkeeper and midfielder. I was also a good runner, and was the best in my class at 100-meter sprint. At sport competitions with students of my age from other schools in the city, I was among the three best sprinters. My physical education teacher, Mr. Stanger, trained me and helped me improve my performance. He had good reasons to do it, since sport was highly appreciated and encouraged by the Soviets. Good sportsmen brought prestige to the school and to its physical education teacher. Moreover, professor Stanger had been given the task to prepare a sportsteam for the Spartakiade in Kiev to be held in the summer of 1945. The Spartakiade was a sport competition somewhat similar to the Olympic games, held within the framework of each Soviet republic. The winners competed subsequently on a national scale in Moscow. Since Czernowitz belonged to the Ukraine Soviet Republic, a selected team of its sportsmen, along with sportsmen from other parts of the Ukraine, participated in the competition in its capital, Kiev. Since I was the best sprinter in our school, I was selected to be a member of our school's team, and run in the 100-meter sprint competition.

For several months I trained intensively for the Spartakiade. I trained after school hours and on weekends at the school's sport stadium. Professor Stanger was often present, with stopwatch in hand, instructing me and measuring my progress. I was very skinny—a result of the meager food rations received during the Romanian rule. However, due to frequent training, I gradually developed strong leg muscles. Perseverance and frequent practice paid off. Towards the end of my practice, Mr. Stanger told me that I am among the best 100-meter runners of my age in the city. I was one of about half a dozen teenagers selected by my school to participate at the Spartakiade in Kiev.

Five days before the opening of the games our group embarked on a freight train for the trip to Kiev. The freight car we occupied had bunks on two levels, covered with straw sacks. On these bunks we were supposed to rest and sleep, since the trip to Kiev was likely to last 3 to 4 days. Due to the chaotic situation created by the war, we did not know the arrival time in Kiev. We shared the freight car with sport teams from other schools, as well as with sportsmen from different factories and from the military.

The trip that under normal conditions would have taken no more than 7 or 8 hours lasted 3 days. We passed through many towns and villages, and the train had to wait often for hours in small railroad stations before moving again. On this trip I discovered the enormous devastation as well as the suffering caused by the war. We passed through villages that were totally demolished or burned to the ground. Houses that used to be inhabited by peasants were burned out shells. Rarely did I see any livestock. Most of the buildings in the small railroad stations were also burned out, with gaping holes where doors and windows used to be. In some of the stations, railroad personnel had restored only one or two rooms in the burned out buildings to be used by the stationmaster. In other instances, temporary wooden shacks had been installed in the railroad station.

I was most deeply impressed, however, by the human misery that I saw on the road. Through the open train door I looked at the changing scenery of hungry, degraded men, women and children, treading on dirt roads through burned-out villages. There were wounded soldiers, arms in slings, with canes or stumps, some with patched or empty eye sockets. Most shocking was the suffering of the countless orphaned homeless children that roamed in the devastated cities and countryside. They could be seen everywhere: in towns, in villages, and in railroad stations. They wandered about bewildered, hungry, sick, barefoot, their frail tiny bodies covered with rags. I still remember the scene at the railroad station in Zhitomir, a town about 80 miles west of Kiev, where our train stopped for several hours. A crowd of civilians and military personnel, with small suitcases and bundles, was waiting on the platform for a train. Some of the people were sitting or sleeping on the platform, while others were resting on their suitcases or bundles. Most of the suitcases were tied with ropes, to prevent them from falling apart. Many of the civilians were wearing shabby military tunics or

soldier overcoats. The strain and furrows on their drawn faces spoke of a life of hardship and privation. The whole platform was enveloped in the odor of "makhorka," the cheap tabacco that was rolled into pieces of newspaper and smoked by many of the waiting men. Homeless children, boys and girls, were milling around in the motley crowd, begging. Dressed in rags and barefoot, with pale drawn faces and oversized *shapkas* (caps) on their heads, they stretched out their little, dirty hands, pleading for a handout with big, sad eyes. Sometimes the plea was accompanied by a single word, said almost in a whisper: *hleb* (bread). Some of the children walked in pairs: a little 4 or 5 years old lead by a 8 or 10 years old, most likely an older brother or sister. These children were called *bezprezornye* (homeless or street children). They had lost both of their parents in the war: the father usually on the front, the mother most likely in one of the countless massacres carried out by the Germans among Soviet civilians. Left alone, without care or supervision, these children survived by begging and sometimes stealing. They slept in railroad stations or in one of the numerous burned out, abandoned buildings. They often jumped on passing trains, traveled hundreds of miles hidden in freight cars, got off in some faraway station, and started again looking for shelter and food. In this war-ravaged country, there was no other help available to them except for the kindness of some adult stranger, who himself lived on tight food rations. It was heartbreaking to see the suffering of these little ones, left at the mercy of a cruel fate. Mr. Stanger told us that there were millions of such homeless children all over the country. As I found out later, only gradually did the government build orphanages for these abandoned children.

In some of the train stations, we could see waiting on sidetracks long trains of flatbed rail cars loaded with machinery and equipment, without cover or protection. These were the major components of German plants and factories, dismantled in Soviet-occupied Germany, and shipped to the Soviet Union. Much of the machinery was already rusty. These trains were many weeks on the road and the equipment, unprotected from rain, had started to deteriorate. Once it reached its final destination, I was wondering, how much of this machinery will still be of any use?

At the end of the third day of travel we finally arrived in Kiev. Like the rest of the railroad stations seen on our trip, Kiev's main train station was also heavily

damaged. The main building was burned out, and the rebuilding of a new one had not yet started. The trains were run from temporary wooden shacks, set up next to the ruins of the main building. These shacks were also the living quarters of the stationmaster and of other railroad personnel. Only some of the railroad tracks had been repaired and were in use. Other tracks lay twisted and broken, torn up by bombs dropped during repeated air raids on the station or during heavy street fighting in the city. The platform was packed with people, some coming and going, others sitting and waiting. Most of them, men and women, wore military outfits. Among them were the always-present *bezprezornye*, the homeless children, milling around and begging.

Kiev is located near the bluffs overlooking the Dnieper river. The city was almost completely destroyed during the war. Heavy fighting took place in and around the city first when the Germans occupied it in September 1941, and again when it was liberated by the Soviets in November 1943. The retreating Germans had blown up whatever had not been destroyed during the fighting. Row after row of burned out or blown up buildings were standing in mute testimony to the destruction brought about by the savage clash between the armies of two implacable enemies. Some of the walls had collapsed and only the chimneys were standing erect and lonely, overlooking the bleak scenery. Detachments of German prisoners of war, guarded by armed Soviet soldiers, were cleaning the streets from the rubble of collapsed buildings. Other prisoners of war were pulling on cables attached to the still standing walls, to bring them down and make room for new buildings. The rubble-strewn streets were only just passable. Military trucks and pedestrians were picking their way cautiously among mounds of debris. The whole sight was that of terrible devastation.

We were quartered in tents near the stadium, where the sport competitions were to take place. The tents were comfortable, the food was good, and with mild weather it felt like being at an outing. The following morning we started practicing in the stadium. We had one day of practice before the start of the Spartakiade. I ran the distance of 100 meters several times, with professor Stanger recording the time. At the end of the day he was satisfied with my performance. “You’ll make it into the semifinals, and with luck, into the finals,” he said to me with a smile. I was in an upbeat mood, confident that I could beat most other competitors of my age. I was also proud of my new sport uniform the

school gave me for this event: navy-blue shorts with red stripe on the side, white jersey, white socks, and white running shoes.

The opening ceremony of the games took place the following morning. There were several thousand participants that came from all corners of the Ukraine. Teenagers and adults, men and women, all in sport uniforms, marched into the stadium in formation to the music of a military band. They paraded in front of a platform filled with government and party officials, then marched on to the center of the stadium. Once all participants were gathered in the stadium, the anthem of the Soviet Union was played, and Soviet flags were raised. After several speeches, accompanied by the customary tribute to the great leader, Joseph Stalin, the games were declared opened.

The competition started in the afternoon. While I was waiting, along with others, to be scheduled for the track and field competition, professor Stanger came over to me, red-faced and very agitated. He took me aside and said: "I have news for you. I just found out that you are not going to run." I was stunned. "Why?" I asked in amazement. "Because the quota allocated to school children by the sport committee in the 100 meter sprint competition has been filled," he said, "and they do not accept additional competitors." I felt like being hit over the head. I felt betrayed. All these months of training and hard work had gone to waste because of a "quota." Tears came to my eyes. Professor Stanger understood my feelings and had a consolation price for me. "The quota for the triple jump has not been filled," he said, "and you have been assigned to participate in that contest." "But I have never done any triple jumping," I said bewildered. "Never mind, I'll show you how to do it" he replied. "Then we can report back home at our school that you have participated in the games. Otherwise, we may have trouble justifying your trip to Kiev." Dejected, I accepted my new assignment, and started to practice the triple jump. Needless to say that on the day of the competition I was eliminated during the first tryouts. I felt depressed and barely talked to anybody during the rest of the games. On the way back to Czernowitz, professor Stanger and I agreed not to divulge the quota story. Each of us had our own reasons to do that. Mr. Stanger wanted to avoid lengthy and embarrassing explanations to the school administration and to the party committee. I wanted to avoid the mocking remarks from some of my colleagues, and preserve the aura of a sport star. Indeed, after my return to

school, my classmates treated me like a great athlete, like a star sprinter. Everybody congratulated me for participating in the games, and the girls gave me a lot of smiles. Gradually I began to feel better. The complements and the smiles had their effect. After all, I had participated in the games, hadn't I? I just did not compete in the area I had trained for. Deep down, however, I felt downcast. I could not forget the disappointment I had experienced in Kiev.

In early May 1945 Berlin fell to the Soviets. On May 9, in the presence of representatives from the United States, the Soviet Union, Great Briton and France, Field Marshal Keitel signed the unconditional surrender of Nazi Germany to the allies. Russian newsreels showed the signing ceremony, which ended with Soviet Marshall Zhukov showing Field Marshall Keitel the door. The bloodiest war in history had finally come to an end.

There was exuberant joy all over Czernowitz. The following day, the streets were full of people, celebrating. The city was festooned with flags, military bands played in parks, and people danced in the streets to the music of uniformed accordion players. Strangers embraced each other, or slapped each other on the back. Most Russians and Ukrainians celebrated as they usually did—with heavy drinking. There was an unlimited supply of vodka. Never have I seen so many drunken people on the street. Some were too drunk to walk. After zigzagging through the cheerful, boisterous crowd, bumping into people and lampposts, feet shaking and out of control, the drunks eventually stumbled, dropped on the cobblestones, and promptly fell asleep. Others, staggering while holding on for dear life to more sober friends, meandered on the sidewalk on wobbly feet, trying to get home. Among them were many drunken women, some in military uniform, giggling and blabbering. Empty liquor bottles littered the streets. The air was filled with music, laughter, and the loud voices of the drunk. A heavy smell of vodka and tabacco hung in the air. In the evening, the sky was illuminated by multicolored fireworks and by moving searchlights.

The Jews of the city also celebrated, although they did it with less vodka than their Russian and Ukrainian neighbors. They had good cause to celebrate, for the simple reason of being alive. The celebration, however, was more subdued among the Jews, due to the losses that every family had suffered during the fascist rule. There was no Jewish family in Czernowitz that had not lost loved

ones in Transnistria or during the massacres at the beginning of the war. At that time we did not know yet about the tragic fate of the Jews of Poland, where many of us had relatives. Nor did we know about the scale of Jewish extermination carried out by the Nazis all over Europe.

Now that the war was over, we were looking forward to hear from my Cousin Edi. Early in the war he had written to his mother, Aunt Anna, informing her that he is doing fine and fighting the Nazi enemy. We concluded that he was on the front at that time, but did not know what happened to him since. Several weeks after the war ended, my grandparents received a letter from Edi, addressed to his mother, who lived at the same address until 1942. Edi, obviously, did not know what had happened to her. He wrote from Berlin, informing his mother that he is well, and that he will be stationed in Germany for the time being, serving as a translator. The Red Army put his knowledge of German to good use, since there was a serious shortage of people speaking Russian and German, languages that Edi spoke fluently. After spending another two years in the army, he was discharged and returned home. By the time Edi returned to Czernowitz, he found there only my grandparents, since the rest of the family was no more alive or had left for Romania.

Edi told me his war story many years later, in America. He spent the war years in the Red Army, fighting the Nazis from Moscow all the way to Berlin, where he took part in house-to-house fighting. At some point he was cut off from his buddies and had to spend the night in a building that was partially occupied by enemy troops. Only a thin wall separated him from the Germans, who were unaware of his presence in their immediate vicinity. In the wee hours of next morning, when the Soviets resumed their attack on the building, Edi discovered that he was in the back of the Germans. He had two hand grenades and his submachine gun. He crawled through the rubble toward the room where the Germans were firing through the window and lobbed one of the hand grenades through the open door. The firing from that room stopped. He crawled then to another room where the crackling of submachine gun fire could be heard. His second hand grenade quieted that room. For good measure, he then sprayed the room with bullets from his submachine gun. His action helped his buddies to occupy the building and earned him a decoration. During the four years he spent on the front he was wounded twice, first in Rzhev and next near Minsk. Each

time he recovered and was sent back to the front. The end of the war found him among the ruins of Berlin. I am very proud of my cousin for his accomplishments on the front. He had avenged his murdered parents.

. A few weeks after the victory celebration, a middle-aged man, with haggard face and dressed in shabby civilian cloths, visited my grandparents. At first, they did not recognize him. It turned out that he was a second cousin of my grandfather, who used to live in Zaleshchiky. The city belonged to Poland before the war, and was now under Soviet rule. I had visited that city with my mother in 1938. Before the war, the visitor owned a small clothing and fabric store in Zaleshchiky, and employed a couple of sales people. He had a wife and two small children. When the war broke out in 1939, the Soviets occupied the city. Since our relative was a storeowner and had several employees, the Soviet authorities considered him a capitalist exploiter. Early in 1941 he was picked up at his home by the NKVD and sent to a labor camp in the Komi Republic near the Ural Mountains. Shortly after Germany invaded the Soviet Union, he was drafted into the Red Army. This was one way of getting out of a labor camp. He spent the war years fighting on different fronts, all the way to Berlin. He was wounded twice, but recovered and went back to his unit. At the end of the war he was discharged from the military and returned to Zaleshchiky to look for his wife and children. He could not find them. Nor could he find his parents, brothers, sisters, or any of his former Jewish neighbors. One of his former Polish neighbors told him that during the war, the Germans had rounded up all the Jews of the city, put them on freight trains, and shipped them to an unknown destination. Our relative remembered my grandfather, found out his address, and came to inquire if he knew anything about the fate of his family. My grandfather had no idea what happened to our family in Poland, since we had lost contact with them during the war. Our relative left and we did not hear from him anymore. Later we learned that our family in Zaleshchiky had been sent to one of the extermination camps, never to be heard from again. It was an irony of fate (a prank played by fate?) that the only family member to survive was the one deported by the Soviets to a labor camp.

I still remember my relatives in Zaleshchiky when I visited with my mother in 1938: their cheerful faces when we got off the train, the embraces and kisses, the sweets they gave me. I also remember the *cheder* next-door, the semi-dark

room full of little, barefoot boys with sidelocks, sitting around the wooden table chanting together with the old, bearded *melamed*. That world did not exist anymore.

Gradually, the enormity of the crimes committed by the Nazis and their accomplices against the Jews of Europe began to emerge. Reality outdid the worst imaginable horror. We found out that countless Jewish communities, which before the war had a vibrant, active life, had vanished. The large communities of Warsaw, Krakow, Lodz, Lublin, Vilna, Kiev, Minsk and hundreds of other smaller Jewish communities, of *shtetls*, existed no more. The hustle and bustle in the narrow streets of these communities, the *Chasidim* rushing to *shul* to pray, the Jewish housewives haggling in the market, the young Jewish mothers walking their little boys to *cheder,* the laughter of children playing in some backyard—all that had disappeared. The Germans had turned those people into smoke and ashes. We heard for the first time the names Auschwitz, Treblinka, Maidanek, Bergen-Belsen, Buchenwald, and became familiar with the words "Nazi extermination camps."

In addition to the enormous loss of life, there was also a horrible loss of precious brainpower, knowledge and creativity. The loss in the areas of arts, science, medicine, music, literature and philosophy, areas in which Jews have been so prolific in the past, was immeasurable. And the loss not only of the children that have been murdered, but also of the millions of children that were doomed never to be born. We could not comprehend the monstrosity of the crimes perpetrated by the Germans.

My father was terribly shocked by those revelations. For most of his life, the word "German" was for him the epitome of culture, correctness, efficiency, discipline, and thoroughness. In many ways he felt and acted more German than Jewish. He had always seen the Germans as a people of culture, who had enriched the treasure of human knowledge with the output of their writers, philosophers, scientists, and composers. The wall-to-wall bookshelves of German literature in our house before the war were testimony of my parents' devotion to that culture. How could the people who have given the world Beethoven, Goethe and Schiller fall under the spell of a criminal madman whom they called "Fuehrer", and commit such monstrous crimes? There was no simple

answer. How skillfully has a simple Austrian corporal, a painter without talent, without title and without wealth, but with an iron will and a fiery demagogic talent, been able to pervert a whole nation. Like a sculptor molds a dead lump of clay into a monster, so has he been able to mold the minds of millions of Germans and Austrians. With his fiery speeches Hitler convinced them to follow him with enthusiasm in the pursuit of his utopia of building a thousand-year Reich for the German "master race," and to save civilization from the "Judeo-Bolshevik threat." Enticed also by the demagogic speeches of Nazi propaganda minister Dr. Goebbels and by the inflammatory articles in the Nazi newspaper *Der Stuermer*, the self-appointed saviors of civilization wrecked havoc all over Europe. They caused enormous suffering and destruction, and murdered a whole people with true Teutonic thoroughness, efficiency and bestiality. How could this happen? Was this only an aberration during the Hitler era, a quirk of history, made possible by the blinding of the German people by a demagogic madman? Or was it something in the German character that had already been "set" long before Hitler, which was only kept in check by the norms of civilization, and which was let loose when Hitler discarded all rules of a civilized society and replaced them with those of Attila the Hun? Whatever the answer, the admiration for German culture and values quickly evaporated in our house. The word "German" was not anymore associated with culture and orderliness, but with cruelty and barbarism. German "efficiency" and "thoroughness," much admired in the past by my father as positive values to be emulated, were now seen in context with the way mass-murder of millions of defenseless and innocent people had been carried out. The most admired people in the past became now for my father the most hated ones.

The calamities of the war brought also other changes in my father's opinions. His past ambiguity about religion came to an end. Before the war he went to Temple on the Jewish High Holidays and followed some of the Jewish rituals. Now, however, he started asking questions that were on everybody's mind: where was God when Hitler and his cohorts slaughtered the Jewish people? Where was God when over a million Jewish children were murdered by the German "supermen?" Where was He when millions of defenseless people were driven into the gas chambers? Where was God when so many innocent members of our family had been murdered? If there is a God, how could He allow such horrible deeds to happen? Were not the most innocent of all people—

babies and small children—among the first to be murdered? If there is a God, my father reasoned, it is not a kind, merciful God as the Bible teaches. Considering what happened to God's "chosen people," my father began to question the existence of a loving Divine Being. He became convinced that if a merciful God existed, He would never have allowed such horrible crimes to be committed on such an enormous scale. From then on, Father never set foot in a synagogue. Mother, in turn, after losing most of her family in Transnistria and in Poland, also became skeptical in her believes.

The enormity of the crimes perpetrated by the Nazis and their accomplices raised questions and doubts also in my mind. Where was God when all this happened? Was this a punishment of His "chosen" people? Why? What misdeeds deserved such horrible punishment? How could one believe in divine justice, charity and kindness in the face of the murder of a million Jewish children? Why did so few, so precious few Christians come to the aid of their fellow human beings? I could not find an answer to these questions. The absence of answers only strengthened my doubts about the existence of a caring, loving Supreme Being. It also shook my faith in man.

I started to feel revulsion for having a German-sounding family name, and wanted to know why most Jews have German - sounding names. Father told me that in the eighteenth century, the Austrian Emperor Joseph the Second requested that all Jews living in his Empire Germanize their names. Since the Austrian Empire occupied a large part of Central Europe at that time and had a significant Jewish population, a large number of European Jews ended up with German names. Most of them kept those names even after they became citizens of other countries. Of course those German names did not protect them from being murdered by the Germans during the Nazi era.

After the war in Europe had come to an end, in the second half of 1945 and in 1946, there was a huge move of population all over the war-ravaged continent. Refugees who had fled the fighting and bombing were now returning home. Liberated slave laborers and concentration camp survivors, emaciated and dressed in rags, were trying to find the means to return to their countries of origin. Demobilized soldiers were returning to their families to start a new life as

civilians. Prisoners of war set free were now returning home. It appeared as if everybody was on the move.

A continuous flow of people made up of former concentration camp inmates, slave laborers and freed prisoners of war passed through Czernowitz. The concentration camp survivors came from Transnistria and some came from former Nazi camps in Poland. The slave laborers came from Poland and were trying to return to their country of origin. The freed prisoners of war came from the Soviet Union. They were from countries allied with Nazi Germany during the war and were now returning home. It was a motley crowd that stayed briefly in the city before moving on. On the streets on could hear a Babel of languages. In addition to Russian, Ukrainian, Yiddish and German spoken by the local population, one could hear Polish, French, Dutch, Serb, Italian, Hungarian, Czech, and many other undistinguishable languages.

In that motley crowd was also a group of former Italian prisoners of war. They have fought on the Russian front, had been captured by the Red Army, and had spent the rest of the war in Soviet prison camps. Now they had been released and passed through Czernowitz on their way back to Italy. In spite of the hardships they had experienced, many of them were cheerful, knowing that they were returning home. With their shiny black hair, dark eyes, and bright smiles, still wearing their military uniforms, they looked quite handsome. The girls of Czernowitz looked with friendly, shiny eyes at these handsome, young men.

Which reminds me of Sophy. She was a young woman that lived not far from our house. She was attractive, intelligent, but aloof and very choosy with regard to the people she associated with. She also had ideas about life and marriage very different from those of other women. While most young women were eager to socialize with young men and eventually get married, Sophy had different ideas. Since she concluded that marriage would be a burden for her and limit her freedom, she had decided not to get married. She wanted, however, to have a child, an attractive, intelligent child. Among her friends and acquaintances, Sophy could not find a man handsome enough to deserve the honor of being the father of her child. She decided to wait until the suitable man came along. She heard about the handsome Italians that were passing through town and decided to take a closer look at them. Sophy saw a group of cheerful, noisy Italians walking through the center of the city, and noticed a dashing, young

officer among them. She decided to approach him and become acquainted with him. After spending years in a prisoner of war camp, the Italian officer obviously was more than eager to befriend this attractive young woman. They communicated in French, since both of them spoke the language fluently. Sophy invited him to her one-room apartment and the following few days they had a good time together. Shortly afterwards, the officer left town with the rest of his comrades. A few months later Sophy's neighbors noticed that she was pregnant. When the time came, she had a charming little boy. She was a happy mother and very proud of her child, in spite of the snickering and gossiping that swept around her. Sophy was a strong-willed woman who knew what she wanted, did not care much about other people's opinion, and had the courage to implement her plan. She was a woman far ahead of her time.

In the spring of 1946 I graduated from high school with straight A grades. With those grades I could enroll at any university department (including medicine) without having to pass an admission exam. In contrast to prewar Romanian universities, attending a Soviet university or medical school was free. Like most of my colleagues, however, I had not decided what career to chose. I was interested in both science and humanities, but I had to choose what career would offer me a more promising future under the Soviet regime.

The school administration decided to help out its graduates. The school organized visits for high school graduates to different factories, hospitals, to the university, to research institutions, and cooperatives. In this way we could learn about the activities in these enterprises, talk to the professionals working there, and find out what line of work was most interesting to each of us. It was a good idea that helped us choose our future careers.

Of all the visits I found the most interesting those at the university's physics department and at the city hospital. At the university we attended a laboratory session on electricity and magnetism. I found the experiments fascinating: the electrical discharges in vacuum tubes, the generation of an electrical current by a dynamo motor and the generation of gases by electrolysis. During my last two years at the Yiddish high school I had not seen any of these experiments, since the school had no equipment to carry them out. I had a very good physics teacher, Gershon Segal, but his teaching was mostly theoretical.

Even so, I found his lectures quite interesting. My visit to the university lab stimulated even more my interest in physics. The career as a physics professor or that as a scientist in physics appeared to me quite attractive.

Another visit I remember well was that to the city hospital. First we visited the psychiatric ward, headed by my friend's father, Dr. Mayer. It was my first contact with mentally disturbed patients, and it left a deep impression on me. Some were sitting and brooding, not aware of our presence. Others were wearing straight jackets and were tied down to a heavy, wooden bench. The doctor explained that these were the violent types, and had to be restrained. The expression on their faces was frightening. Some patients were staring in the air or talking to themselves. There were others that were walking around freely, but had weird behavior and strange looks in their eyes. In one of the rooms we saw a smiling, attractive young woman that fascinated the boys in our group. She was waiting for us to approach her. When we came close to her, she grabbed our guide, a middle-aged doctor, by the arm, pulled him over to her bed, and started to unbutton her dress. The doctor said a few quiet words to her, then pushed her gently away and walked to the next room. This event, naturally, was an exiting subject of conversation among us teenagers after we left the hospital.

We had several girls in our group, which were interested in becoming pediatricians or gynecologists. They wanted to see the maternity ward and delivery room. At first, our guide was not inclined to take us there, since he felt that it was not appropriate for teenagers to see such a place. Eventually, the girls were able to convince him and he took us to that section of the hospital. We entered a large room, in which about a dozen women, lying on surgical tables, were in different stages of giving birth. With bloated bellies and faces contorted by suffering, the women were groaning and screaming in pain. Doctors and nurses, standing next to some of those screaming women, busied themselves helping them deliver. There was pandemonium in the room. The screams of the women in pain were mingled with the screaming of just born babies. Bloodstained linen was lying on the floor in small piles. The white coats of the doctors and nurses were also blood-splattered. The heavy smell of blood, sweat and urine in the room made me feel nauseated. I ran out into the hallway, pushed open a window, and took a deep breath of fresh air, just in time not to throw up.

At that moment I decided that medicine is not for me. I just did not have the stomach for it—literally speaking.

While we toured the hospital, in addition to the doctor who guided us, we also were accompanied by a medical orderly named Paul. He was in his early twenties, had expressive dark eyes, and looked frail, like everyone in our group. The war years had left their mark on all of us. A colleague of mine knew Paul. During the war, he and his family had been deported from Czernowitz to Transnistria. His parents died there and he ended up in an orphanage. In 1944, Paul returned to Czernowitz and found a job as an orderly in the city hospital. In his spare time he wrote poetry in German, his native tongue. Years later I learned that Paul went to West Germany, where he had his poems published under the name Paul Celan. He became one of the most famous German poets of the post-war era. In 1970, while in Paris, he committed suicide. The terrible experiences in the early stage of his life had taken their toll.

At the end of August 1946 I enrolled at the physics department of the University of Czernowitz. Although I was also interested in different areas of the humanities such as the arts and literature, I decided on a career in physics, to which I felt strongly attracted. Choosing a career in science was less risky than a career in humanities, since it was less likely to be affected by the changing political winds. Modern works of art, poems or novels that were considered valuable at one time ran the risk of being considered later as mere products of bourgeois decadence. Those artists and writers that created these works, as well as those that wrote or spoke appreciatively of them could find themselves almost overnight in deep trouble. This was less likely to happen in science—although it did happen, especially in biology.

After attending the first week of lectures, my university studies came to an abrupt halt. The course of my life took a sharp turn.

During the spring and summer of 1944, the advancing Red Army had occupied most of Northern Romania. On August 23, King Michael decided to switch sites. He had Marshal Ion Antonescu along with his foreign minister arrested. He then ordered the Romanian troops to stop hostilities against the Soviet Union and start fighting the German troops stationed in Romania. At the end of 1944, the Soviets entered Bucharest.

A succession of coalition governments followed the Antonescu regime that resulted in the rapid increase in power and influence of the Romanian Communist party. The presence of Soviet troops on Romanian soil and the inaction of the Western Allies made free elections impossible. After a rigged election in March 1945, a coalition government that included the Communist party took power under Prime Minister Petru Groza. It was well known that Groza was a stooge of the communists. Key positions in the government were now under communist control. Another fraudulent election in November 1946 further consolidated the power of the Communist party in the country.

After Bertha and Shmuel left Czernowitz, they moved closer to the front that had temporarily stabilized in the region Dorohoi and Botosani, in the northern part of Romania. They spent several weeks in Dorohoi. After Romania switched sites in August 1944 and Soviet troops entered Bucharest, Bertha and Shmuel arrived there shortly afterwards. Their objective was to reach Palestine with the help of the Zionist Organization of Romania. Considering their past Zionist affiliations, Shmuel applied to Bethar for assistance, while Bertha applied to Hashomer Hatzair. The Zionist Organization had received a number of immigration certificates for Palestine, issued by the British authorities. These certificates were part of the quota allocated by the British Mandate for Jewish immigration to Palestine. During the war these certificates had not been used due to the military conflict. There were few certificates and the leaders of the Zionist Organization of Romania decided to give priority to refugees from Soviet territories. Shmuel received a certificate through the Bethar organization, in recognition of his many years of membership in that organization, and of his flight from the Soviet Union. He boarded a ship in the Romanian port Constantsa that took him to Haifa in Palestine.

Bertha encountered more difficulties in her effort to reach Palestine. She spent several weeks at a *hachsharah* camp of the Hashomer Hatsair organization, where she was trained for life in a kibutz. After completing the training, she was given an immigration certificate for Palestine. She boarded a train to Bulgaria, from where she planned to travel through Turkey, Syria and Lebanon to Palestine. When she reached the Bulgarian -Turkish border, she was told that the immigration quota for Palestine had been filled. That meant that the British authorities allowed no more Jewish immigrants to enter Palestine in 1944. Bertha had to wait several weeks near the border, and only at the beginning of the following year was she able to continue her travel. She arrived in Palestine in January 1945, where she was reunited with Shmuel. They had finally achieved their goal.

After they occupied Northern Bukovina and advanced into Romania, the Russians reestablished the border between the Soviet Union and Romania as it was in June of 1941. In the spring and fall of 1945, and again in 1946, the Soviets opened the border briefly, to allow former Romanian citizens to cross over into Romania. The process was called "repatriation." All that was needed to cross the border was a permit (*propuska*), readily issued by the Soviet authorities to Bukovina residents. The eagerness of the authorities to issue permits had a simple explanation. They needed every house and apartment that had not been destroyed during the war. "Repatriation" would go a long way to solve the housing problem in Czernowitz. Most Jews of Czernowitz and of other parts of Northern Bukovina took advantage of the "repatriation" policy and crossed the border into Romania. They settled in Southern Bukovina and in other parts of the country. Many of them were hoping eventually to emigrate to Palestine.

For my parents the decision to resettle was not an easy one. My father was advanced in age, weakened by the hardships endured during the war, and plagued by a chronic cough. He knew that he was too weak and ill to resume his attorney practice in Romania. But he also knew that he could not practice his profession under the Soviets. Moreover, from the communist viewpoint, he (and implicitly his family) belonged to the capitalist class, and was, therefore, an "enemy of the working class." We all remembered very well how, in 1941, the

NKVD men came in the middle of the night to pick up the "enemies of the working class" and sent them to some distant labor camps. Those deportations were interrupted by the outbreak of the war, and now they may be resumed again. Indeed, we heard rumors that in other parts of the Soviet Union liberated from German occupation, thousands of people had been picked up by the NKVD and deported. Somewhat hesitant, my father decided that we should leave.

Mother did not hesitate. Given the choice of living under a dictatorship or a democracy—which Romania still was at the time—she believed that life in a democratic country had a brighter future, especially for me. That somehow we would be able to make a better living in Romania. She was convinced that I would be able to continue my studies in a democratic country and live a free life. Mother was also encouraged by the fact, related in letters from those who left for Romania a year earlier, that the "Joint Distribution Committee" (a Jewish-American charity organization) was assisting the newly arrived repatriates. Bertha's departure from the Soviet Union contributed to Mother's decision. She did not want to be cut off from her. Neither did she want to be cut off from Uncle Joseph and Aunt Ruchel, who left for Romania a year earlier and were living now in Bucharest. Mother was firm in her decision to leave.

Initially I had mixed feelings about moving. I enjoyed my university courses and would have liked to continue them. But I also realized that almost all our friends and acquaintances had left or were leaving. When mother told me that I would be able to continue my studies in Romania, I agreed with my parents to leave.

In early September 1946 we applied for and received the required *propuska* for repatriation. Mother had no difficulties finding a buyer for our furniture and household goods that we could not take with us. The buyer was a young captain and his wife. By buying our furniture, the couple took also possession of our apartment—a precious commodity in a war-devastated country. They agreed to pay us eight hundred rubles for our belongings when we move out. To make sure that we don't change our mind and that he will take possession of the apartment, the captain left his military coat on a hanger in the apartment before leaving. We packed a suitcase of clothing for each of us, a bundle of bedding, and a large trunk with pots, pans and other kitchenware,

including a wash board. I also packed in my suitcase several books and my small stamp collection.

Mother arranged with a peasant to take us with his horse-drawn cart to the border. On the morning of our departure, the captain and his wife arrived to take over the apartment and its content. After Mother gave him the keys, he told her to wait while he verified that everything we agreed to sell him was there. While the couple was in the bedroom, a heated argument started between the captain and his wife. Through the closed door we could hear what they were arguing about. The captain had no intention of paying us anything. He said to his wife that we were "deserting" the Soviet Union and therefore we do not deserve to be paid. His wife replied in an irritated voice that decency and the word given by an officer require that the agreement be respected. After awhile they came out of the bedroom, both of them quite agitated. The officer handed money to my mother. It was four hundred rubles, half of what was initially agreed. When mother pointed that out to the captain, he replied that he has no more money, and that we should consider ourselves lucky that we are paid at all. Since we were in no position to argue with him, we left. At least we had some money in our pocket.

After a two-hour ride on a bumpy, unpaved road, we arrived at the small, sleepy border town Siret, located on a shallow river with the same name. There we found other Jewish families waiting to cross over into Romania. We had to wait for our turn. While we waited, we could see how the border control took place. After checking the documents, the Soviet border guards searched the baggage, and some of the people were submitted to body searches. They were looking for valuables, such as jewelry and gold coins, as well as foreign currency, primarily dollars. We had heard rumors that some families, after selling their belongings prior to departure, had used the rubles received to purchase dollars on the black market. The authorities obviously knew about these rumors, and were determined not to let anything of value go through.

The search was thorough and without regard of damage caused. They cut open pillows, tore open the seams of padded clothing, ripped off the soles and heals from shoes. They even took apart washboards and ripped open the walls of suitcases, looking for hidden precious stones, gold, and bank notes.

When our turn came, one of the border guards wanted first to see our *propusk*. After verifying the document, he told my father to pay the peasant who brought us to the border. Father took out his wallet, where he kept all his money, to pay the waiting peasant. At that moment, the guard grabbed the wallet, took out all the money, gave a hundred-ruble note to the peasant, pocketed the rest of the money, and returned the empty wallet to my father. We were stunned. We had been robbed of all the money received from the sale of our household, as well as money saved from the sale of different goods in the flee market. We were left penniless.

Empty wallet in his hand, Father stared at the soldier. Rage boiling up inside him. His face turned deep red, his eyes bulged, the veins on his temples swelled, and his hands started to shake. He was tense like a taut string, but he suppressed his fury. I could see the great effort he made to control his rage. He felt powerless and humiliated, since he knew well that we were at the mercy of those border guards. Any protest would have been useless. On the contrary, it could have been used as an excuse to prevent us from crossing the border. On that occasion we found out that when it came to robbing Jews, the communist dictatorship had much in common with the fascist dictatorship.

The peasant that brought us to the border with his cart unloaded quickly our belongings in the middle of the road, turned the horse around and left in a hurry. Having taken all our money, the border guards didn't spend much time searching our baggage. True, they still went through each piece of luggage, took apart my mother's wash board, and tore up the pages of my stamp-collection album, searching for hidden foreign bank notes. But they didn't cut open the pillows or rip apart our cloths, nor did they do any body search. They probably figured that somebody who is naïve enough to carry all his money in a wallet is less likely to try to smuggle valuables.

We finally came to the border. A heavy wooden beam, painted alternatively in black and white, marked the border. The beam blocked the road connecting the two countries. It could be raised to let trucks or cars pass, but it was not raised for pedestrians. We had to drag our suitcases, bundles and Mother's trunk with kitchenware over a narrow walkway to the other side of the border. On the Romanian side, the Romanian border guard glanced briefly at our document and waived us through. His face was morose and unfriendly. He

was not happy to see all those Jews coming back to Romania. Peasants with horse-drawn carts were waiting for customers, to take them and their luggage to their destination. Also present were representatives of the "Joint." They gave several hundred lei (Romanian money) to every family that arrived on Romanian soil, since the Soviets had ensured that everybody who crossed the border was penniless. We had now enough money to pay for transportation and to buy some food. We rented a horse-drawn cart, loaded our belongings, and left the border. Our destination was Suceava, a two-hour cart ride from the border. Thus began a new chapter in our life.

Suceava is a small city in Southern Bukovina, located on the banks of the river with the same name, at the foot of the Carpathian Mountains. Next to it are the ruins of a fortress, built about five hundred years ago by the ruler of the principality of Moldavia that is now part of Romania. Later that area came under Ottoman rule. In 1774, Suceava was incorporated into Austria. At the end of World War I, with collapse of the Austrian-Hungarian Empire, the city came under Romanian rule. More recently, Suceava was the administrative center of Northern Moldavia.

In 1946, Suceava was a small, provincial city. It had a main street lined with two-story buildings, most of them erected before World War I. At the ground floor of these buildings was a variety of small stores, while at the upper floors were living quarters and offices. Several smaller streets branched out from the main street, and ended in open fields. In the center of the city was the town hall, a four-story building with a clock tower on top. Across the street from the town hall building was a small public park, graced by a bronze bust of the Romanian composer Ciprian Porumbescu. The city had numerous churches and monasteries, many of them build by Moldavian rulers centuries ago. With their beautifully glazed tile roofs and old frescoes, the monasteries attracted numerous visitors.

Before World War II there was a thriving Jewish community in Suceava. Jews were active mainly in the professions and in commerce. In 1940, when Czernowitz was occupied by the Soviets, Suceava remained under Romanian rule. After the invasion of the Soviet Union by Nazi Germany and its allies, the Jews of Suceava were deported to Transnistria, mostly to the villages of

Shargorod and Murafa. The Red Army liberated the survivors in the spring of 1944, and let them return home.

My father, who was born in Suceava, spent the early part of his life in that city. Although his family that used to live in Suceava did not survive the war, he still felt attracted to his place of birth. Father knew several Jewish families from the past, as well as some of the people who have come more recently from Czernowitz. For those reasons my father decided to return to Suceava with his family.

When we arrived in Suceava the city was extremely crowded. Some Romanians, who have fled Northern Bukovina, had settled in Suceava. Many of the Bukovina Jews who returned from Transnistria also came to Suceava. They included Jews who lived in smaller towns before the war, but who decided not to return to these towns where many of their family members and friends had been murdered prior to deportation. The city had a number of Jewish families from Czernowitz, who had arrived there ahead of us.

The result of such overcrowding was the total absence of available living quarters. Every apartment, every house was packed with people. On the day of our arrival, a frantic search by my parents for living space turned out fruitless. We had to settle in an abandoned warehouse, with empty wooden shelves along the walls and discarded, empty cardboard boxes on the cement floor. The room had two small dirty windows and a rusty iron door. The door did not close tightly, and there was a constant draft in the room.

The first night we slept on the cement floor on our own bedding. We took out from our baggage all the blankets we had, spread them out on the floor over old newspapers, put on top of them some down pillows and down covers—and our beds were ready. It was a long, cold night. None of us could sleep. The cement floor was hard and cold, while the thin blankets we slept on provided little comfort. Father kept coughing continuously, and the constant draft made us shiver throughout the night. We could barely wait for daylight.

The following day we got some straw mattresses from the Jewish Community Center, as well as some warm food. My parents' search for a better place to live proved again fruitless. We had to stay in the same cold warehouse, without any furniture, without heat, and sleep on the cement floor.

A week went by until we were finally able to find a better place in the house of an old lady, Mrs. Rachmut. Before the war she and her husband occupied the whole house. When the war broke out, they were deported to Transnistria together with all other Jews of Suceava. Mr. Rachmut died in a labor camp, but his wife survived. When the war ended, she returned home and took possession of her house. In her absence the house had deteriorated, and when Mrs. Rachmut took it over, it was quite dilapidated. Having no other source of income, she rented out each room in the house to a different family, leaving two rooms and a toilet for herself. My father had been a friend of Mr. Rachmut before the war, and he also knew Mrs. Rachmut. He remembered that they used to own a house, and went to see Mrs. Rachmut. He described to her our plight, and asked her if she could rent us a room. Since she knew my father, she decided to let us have one of her two rooms.

To reach our room, we had to walk over a rickety, wooden veranda, enter a dark hallway, and pass through Mrs. Rachmut's room before entering our room through a tall, double door. The room was empty, except for a single light bulb suspended in the middle of the ceiling. There were two windows facing the street, and a small door leading to a storage area. The floor was made of worn-out, wooden boards. A coat of paint once covered the boards, but now only traces of paint could be seen on the floor near the walls. The room used to have a tile stove for heating. During the war, the tiles and the stove had been stolen, and all that was left was a black, round hole in the wall, leading to the chimney. There was no toilet or running water, and we had to use an outhouse. Water had to be brought into the room in buckets from an outdoor faucet.

Since we had been robbed at the border and had nothing of value to sell, we were totally destitute. We depended entirely on assistance from the local Jewish Community and Jewish-American charitable organizations. Father's health was deteriorating rapidly. The years of persecution, the extreme aggravation at the border, the sleeping on the cement floor in a warehouse, the despair brought about by penury and the inability to find a decent place to live – all these factors had a devastating effect on my father's health. It was at that time that he had a stroke that paralyzed the left side of his body. Even with a cane he could barely walk, and his left arm had become useless. Incapacitated

and unable to care for his family anymore, he fell into a state of deep depression.

Several weeks after we moved into Mrs. Rachmut's house, Mother was able to find a job. At the end of the war, a "OSE" (Jewish-American children's rescue organization) canteen for children was set up in Suceava, under the management of Moshe Liquornik. Hundreds of Jewish children, many of them orphans, were fed at that canteen, mostly with canned food sent from America. Many Jewish families, being refugees or survivors from Transnistria, lived in abject poverty and were unable to feed their children. For those families, sending their children to the OSE canteen meant saving them from hunger and malnutrition. Mr. Liquornik needed a bookkeeper, and my mother was fortunate to obtain that position.

Mother's job was a stroke of luck for the whole family. She received a modest salary that allowed us to buy some basic necessities. More important, as part of her compensation, she was allowed to bring home daily some food from the canteen, for father and myself. At that time there was an extreme shortage of food, and even with money it was difficult to buy food. I still can remember the delight we felt when eating for the first time canned apricots or peaches in their syrup that Mother brought home from the canteen. After years of deprivation, it felt like feasting on ambrosia, the food of gods.

With the money earned by my mother, we bought a few pieces of furniture: three beds, made of unfinished, unpainted wooden boards, and a simple table with four chairs. We also bought a wood stove for cooking and heating. Each of the beds was installed in one corner of the room. In the fourth corner, where the chimney was, we installed the wood stove. The table and chairs were placed in the middle of the room. A worn rug that we had brought from Czernowitz was placed in the center of the room. This became our furnished living quarter.

I discussed with my parents the possibility of finding some work for me, but both Father and Mother wanted me to continue my studies. They felt that only through a good education would I have a chance of a better life in the future. Once my parents decided that I should continue my studies, I focused all my efforts to prepare for the exams required to be admitted to the university.

Considering the hardships my parents had already experienced, I did not want to disappoint them.

First I had to gain recognition of my Soviet high school certificates by the Romanian authorities. That was granted, but I had to take additional exams in Romanian literature, history and geography, subjects that I have not been taught under the Soviets. After studying intensively for several weeks, I was able to pass the required exams in the fall of 1946. Having taken all the exams required for graduation from high school, there remained one more difficult exam to take: the baccalaureate. Following the example of the French schooling system, after completing high school a difficult exam of several subjects—the baccalaureate—was required in order to be accepted by any university in the country. The required subjects were Romanian and French literature, math, physics, chemistry, history, geography, and philosophy. The exam had a written and oral part and lasted for three days. The oral part of the exam took place in front of a commission of six professors. It was a grueling exam, since it covered material taught in the last four years of high school. The Ministry of Education sent the questions for the written part of the exam in a sealed envelope that was opened by the examining commission only prior to the exam.

My proficiency in Romanian language and literature was limited, since I had spent the last five years outside any school or in schools that taught in a different language. My knowledge of French language and literature, one of the subjects tested, was limited to what I had been able to learn during the war at home, a time when I was not allowed to attend school. In high school under the Soviets I had selected German as the optional foreign language. The other required subjects I had studied in the last five years in a half-hazardous, desultory way. I knew I had to work hard to take this exam.

I had two weeks to prepare, and went to work with vengeance. I had to make up for all those years I have been prevented of attending school. The necessary schoolbooks I received from the Jewish high school that had just been opened under the direction of Professor Isidor Schulmann. I studied twelve to fourteen hours daily. When the first day of exam arrived by the end of October, I was ready. I passed the exam, finishing third best among seventy students.

A week later I was on my way to Bucharest, to register for admission at the Physics and Chemistry Department of the University of Bucharest. Mother had saved enough money to buy me a one-way train ticket to Bucharest.

When I arrived in Bucharest, I went to see Uncle Joseph and Aunt Ruchel. They had come to Romania a year earlier and Uncle Joseph had started work in a small paper and cardboard business owned by his long-time friend, Mr. Biedermann. Before the war, Mr. Biedermann owned a stationary store in Czernowitz, under the name "Biedermann & Kindler." Uncle Joseph worked for him before establishing his own business. When the Soviets occupied Czernowitz in 1940, Mr. Biedermann fled to Bucharest, and at the end of the war started a small stationary business. He then wrote to Uncle Joseph and convinced him to come to Bucharest and join him in his newly established company. My uncle and aunt left Czernowitz and settled in Bucharest.

At the end of the war the housing shortage in Bucharest was as bad as in Suceava. In 1940, many Romanian refugees from Northern Bukovina and Bessarabia settled in Bucharest. During the war, another wave of Romanian refugees came from Northern Transylvania, when, under German pressure, Romania was forced to give it up to Hungary. The advancing Soviet armies brought a new wave of refugees in 1944. At the end of the war, some of the Jews returning from Transnistria also came to Bucharest. Since no new buildings have been erected during the war, the housing shortage in the city was extremely acute.

Uncle Joseph and Aunt Ruchel were able to find a one-room apartment on Aviator Drosu Street, in a nice, quiet section of the city, not far from Lake Herestrau. Their furniture consisted of a bed, a cupboard and a small table with chairs. Since there was no other place for me to stay in Bucharest, they accepted me in their tiny apartment. There was no room for a second bed, and I had to sleep on a mattress on the floor. In the evening I rolled out the mattress, and in the morning I rolled it up again. It was not a comfortable arrangement, but we already had become accustomed to discomfort. From my childhood I still remember how good and helpful Uncle Joseph had been to my mother and me. He again showed his kindness by sharing his small quarters with me so that I could attend the university.

Due to the chaotic situation in the country, the university opened later that year and I could still register in November. Because of my good baccalaureate grades I had no difficulties of being accepted. Furthermore, in view of the persecutions suffered by the Romanian Jews in the past under the Antonescu regime, the university administration was now very accommodating when it came to Jewish applicants.

I was interested in attending primarily the lectures in physics that I already started in Czernowitz. At that time I was much less interested in chemistry. However, since physics and chemistry were taught at the university in the same department, I also had to attend lectures in chemistry. As it turned out, attending lectures and taking exams in chemistry resulted in an unforeseen change in my future career.

When I arrived in Bucharest at the end of 1946, the country was sliding deeper into chaos. During the last months of the war, the peasants had their grain confiscated or destroyed by the different armies that fought on Romanian soil. In the spring of 1946, there were not enough grain seeds left for cultivation, and most of the arable land remained fallow. The few fields that were cultivated were hit by a devastating drought in the summer of the same year. The consequences were disastrous. The peasants did not have enough food to feed their own families, let alone to feed the population of the cities. There was famine in the country and many people, mainly the old and the sick, died from starvation. Some of the food, such as corn meal, sent from America by humanitarian organizations, was spoiled due to improper transportation or storage. Even the strict rationing of food imposed by the government did not help. Simply put, there was not enough food to feed everybody.

My parents were protected from the famine, since my mother had the good fortune to work in the OSE canteen. The "Joint" organization made sure that the canteen did not run out of food. Periodically, Mother sent me a package of canned food—soup, vegetables, fruit compote, egg powder—which I shared with my uncle and aunt. Still, there were many days when we went to bed hungry.

There was also a serious shortage of fuel in the country. Many of the oil refineries have been destroyed or damaged during the war and have only been

partially rebuild. A large quantity of the oil produced was shipped to the Soviet Union as part of war reparations. When the winter arrived, there was not enough fuel for heating and transportation. The lecture halls at the university were rarely heated, and both students and professors were wearing overcoats and gloves during the lectures. Buildings with central heating were allowed to use heating oil only several hours a day. At night, we slept dressed with sweaters and wool socks under the covers, trying to stay warm. Transportation by bus was also hampered, due to lack of fuel and the breakdown of the machines. The breakdown of the mass transit system forced people to walk daily long distances in freezing weather to and from work. I had to walk from my uncle's apartment to the university a distance of several kilometers. That also meant getting up two hours earlier on a winter morning, in order to arrive on time for the lecture.

The political situation in the country was also deteriorating. The democratic regime established shortly after the war was short lived. After the March 1945 elections, the political coalition set up by the communists under the name "The Block of Democratic Parties," headed by Primeminister Petru Groza, expanded rapidly its power and influence in the country. A new electoral law was passed that favored the communists. The parliament was reduced to a unicameral body, controlled by the communist Block. In the spring of 1946, Marshal Ion Antonescu was tried and executed. The communist-led Block tried to broaden its support in the country by promising a series of reforms appealing to the working- and middle-class, as well as to the peasants. By using democratic slogans and promising democratic reforms, the Block was able to increase its influence in the country.

At the same time, the "historic", traditional political parties—the National Peasant's Party and National Liberal Party—were struggling for their life. In November of 1946, new elections took place. Similar to the 1945 elections, these elections were also rigged. Although the majority of the population was strongly anticommunist, the presence of the Red Army in the country assured a communist victory. "The Block of Democratic Parties," led by the communists, won with 80 percent of the vote. The day prior to elections, members of the opposition National Peasant Party that were supposed to observe the election

process and participate in the vote count were arrested on trumped up charges. Many voting places were staffed exclusively with communist-allied observers. Under those conditions, it was easy for the communists and their allies to stuff the ballot boxes with procommunist votes. In some instances, the government used ingenious means to stifle the opposition. For example, in the village of Bosanci, near Suceava, which was known as a stronghold of the opposition National Peasant Party, the communist-controlled authorities discovered an "epidemic" in the days prior the elections, and imposed quarantine. Naturally, on election day, the people of Bosanci could not vote. A few days after the elections, the same authorities discovered that actually there was no epidemic and the quarantine was lifted. Later we learned that such quarantines had also been imposed in other parts of the country.

To attract the Jewish vote, the Block of Democratic Parties accepted the Jewish National Block as a member of the coalition. The Jewish National Block included Jewish organizations of every political stripe. Consequently, in the 1946 elections, the Block of Democratic Parties had strong support among the Jewish voters. The Jews believed the promises made by the representatives of the Groza government that their concerns would be addressed after the elections. Moreover, the Jews looked with suspicion at the National Peasant Party that had an unfriendly attitude towards the Jews and had been joined by former members of the Iron Guard and of the Cuza-Goga party.

A few months after the November elections, in the summer of 1947, the leaders of the National Peasant Party were arrested and the party dissolved. Later that year, the leader of the party, Juliu Maniu, and its vice-president Ion Michalache, were put on trial and condemned to life imprisonment. In the same year, Ana Pauker was named foreign minister and Emil Bodnarash was named minister of defense. Both were lifetime communists.

To increase its influence in the Jewish community, the Communist Party dissolved the Jewish National Block after the 1946 elections and created the Jewish Democratic Committee (*Comitetul Democratic Evreesc*, or CDE). This Committee served as a "transmission belt" between the party and the Jewish community. Its main purpose was to stir the Jewish political life in the direction set by the party, and to eliminate any non-communist ("bourgeois") political influence among the Jews.

Following the election victory of November 1946, the Communist Party started to adopt and implement some Stalinist economic measures. The banks were nationalized, production plans and prices were set for different sectors of the economy, and raw materials were allocated to various industries.

Some larger enterprises tried to resist the government dictate. One of them was the company that ran the streetcars in Bucharest. The company had been prohibited from raising the ticket prices to keep pace with rampant inflation. At the same time, it was forced to continue operating the streetcars. When the company ran out of money it stopped the maintenance work on the streetcars. As a result, the cars started to break down in their tracks. Those few that were still running had broken doors, missing windows, and peeling paint. They were packed with people to the limit, with some standing on the buffers, and others hanging on the broken doors. A year later, the company was nationalized, the former owners arrested, accused of sabotage, and convicted to long prison terms.

The political tensions in the country were also present at the university. There were student organizations that supported or sympathized with the Communist Party, among them many Jews, while other organizations supported the "historic," nationalistic parties. Before the November 1946 elections there were frequent verbal clashes on campus between the two groups. The professors, most of them still appointed under the previous regime, were mostly nationalistic, anticommunist and not quite friendly towards Jews. Some of them, like one of my physics professors, sprinkled their lectures with derogatory remarks about Jews.

After the November 1946 elections, the atmosphere on campus changed. Members of the Communist Party and their allies were appointed to key positions in the university administration. Communist propaganda on campus intensified. People finally realized that the communist takeover of the country was irreversible. Professors and students who in the past supported openly the democratic parties kept now their political opinions to themselves. The admission policies on campus were changed, to allow more members of the "working class," i.e. the sons and daughters of workers and poor peasants, to enter the university. At the same time, the number of accepted applicants that

came from middle-class families was reduced. The "social origin" of the applicant, not his or her grades in high school, became the decisive factor in the admission process. "Social origin" was a new term used to characterize a person, and to decide his or her position and future in the newly established communist system. Applicants coming from working class families were considered as having a "sound" social origin and were readily accepted. They received financial support and were encouraged to join the Communist Party. Applicants from middle-class or upper middle-class families had an "unsound" social origin. Only a small number of openings were reserved for them, and only those with top grades were accepted.

The Communist Party started to direct and control all activities on campus. Political meetings, pro-government demonstrations, even social gatherings were all under party control. Party members decided who will speak at meetings and what will be said. Student newspapers towed the party line. Professors that in the past had expressed nationalistic or anticommunist political opinions were gradually replaced. The newly appointed university professors were selected on the basis of their political orientation rather than on professional qualifications. This was the case especially in the departments for humanities, such as philosophy, linguistics, history and art, where the lectures had often a heavy ideological content.

In the spring of 1947 I took my first exams in physics and mathematics. When the vacation started, I went back home, to Suceava. The train that took me from the *Gara de Nord* rail station in Bucharest to Suceava was so overcrowded that I could barely move. The compartments and the passageways of each railcar were packed with people, suitcases and bundles. The travelers were a motley, smelly, noisy mixture of shabbily dressed city folks and peasants in sheepskin vests. There were old, frail women, their heads covered with dark kerchiefs, and younger women with crying, snotty babies. A heavy smell of tabacco, onion and perspiration hang in the air. Some people, who could not find room inside the train traveled outside, sitting on the running boards or on top of the railcars with their bundles. When the train stopped at a rail station there was pushing and shoving by people trying to get off the train and those trying to get on the train. Tempers flared. Some of the people who were not

close to the door and tried to get off the train were unable to reach the door in time, and were cussing and arguing with those standing in their way. They were finally able to push their way through and get off the train at the next station. They were irate, disheveled and their clothing was torn. When the train stopped in Pascani, a rail center in Northern Romania, a mass of people tried to get on the train, pushing against those who were trying to get off. Among those trying to get on the train was also a group of Russian soldiers. Rather than push their way through the crowd, they found an easier way to get on the train. They broke the window of a rail car with their rifle buts, and climbed into the train through the broken window. I happened to be in the compartment with the broken window, and ended up with a lot of glass shards in my lap. Once inside, the soldiers demanded that the passengers make room for them, so that they can sit down. Naturally, we all complied promptly with the request, and had to travel standing the rest of the trip.

The train ride that was supposed to last about six hours took a full day. I arrived home tired and hungry, but was glad to see my parents. Mother had not changed much in the eight months since I left Suceava, except for the hair that showed streaks of gray. However, I was surprised and saddened to see how much my father's condition had deteriorated. The partial paralysis that struck him shortly after our arrival in Suceava had progressed. He could not walk without support even from his bed to the table. He could not wash and dress by himself. For months Mother had to wash, dress and feed my father every morning before going to work.

I soon realized that my vacation would not be much of a vacation. While mother worked in the OSE canteen, I stayed home with my father. Every morning I helped him get dressed, served him breakfast, and helped him into a chair near the window. He sat there for several hours, almost motionless, looking at the people hurrying by, at the horse-drawn carts climbing slowly the steep road, and at the peasants pushing the carts while cracking their whips. After awhile father fell asleep in his chair. At noon I helped him to the table and we had lunch together. We ate whatever was left over from the food mother had brought home from the canteen the previous day. Afterwards I helped father undress and climb into bed. He usually slept until Mother came home. Only after dinner did I go out for a walk and enjoyed some fresh air. This became my daily

routine, and only Sunday, when Mother did not go to work, did I have the whole day to myself.

As time went by, I found out more about the extent of the calamity that had struck the Jewish people of Europe during the years of Nazi rule. From newspaper reports, from radio commentaries and from the literature distributed by various Jewish organizations, I obtained more detailed information about the Holocaust. The trials of top Nazi war criminals at Nuremberg, described in detail by the Romanian press, revealed the enormous scale of murder and destruction perpetrated by the Nazis in their drive to become masters of the world. I learned that during the Nazi era the Germans had invented and perfected the mechanized obliteration of human beings, carried out with true Germanic thoroughness. Millions of defenseless and innocent men, women and children that had been labeled *Untermenschen* (sub-humans), had been turned into smoke and ashes with industrial efficiency.

I also learned about the attitude of the Western democratic governments before and during the war towards the European Jewry that was in mortal danger. I found out that the attitude of these governments was far from generous. I learned how in 1939 over eleven hundred German-Jewish refugees on board the ocean liner "Saint Louis" were refused entry first into Cuba and then into the United States. After drifting along the coast of Florida, within sight of Miami, the liner with its load of refugees was forced to return to Europe. Shortly before the war, in 1939, a petition to the American government by the Quakers and several clergymen to allow twenty thousand German-Jewish children into the country apart from the regular German quota was denied by Congress and by the President. The rejection came in spite of the willingness of thousands of American families to adopt temporarily these children and thus remove the burden of their support from the government. The result of that rejection was that years later many of these children ended up in Hitler's mass graves or gas chambers.

The British, in turn, did not display a much more humanitarian attitude either. Just when the Jews were looking desperately for a refuge, the British closed the gates of Palestine to Jewish refugees, accepting only a trickle of immigrants based on their new "quota" system. Hundred of thousand of

refugees who could have been saved in Palestine were left in Hitler's claws. The same callous attitude towards the fate of the Jews persisted during the war. In 1944, the Western governments were already well aware of the genocide perpetrated by the Nazis against the Jews in the East European extermination camps. Still, while thousands of allied planes bombed day and night the German cities to rubble, the allied military command ignored the pleas of American Jewish organizations to bomb the rail road tracks leading to Auschwitz. They could not spare a single plane for that purpose. These were the tracks on which trains packed with thousands of Jews arrived daily in the camp, where the cargo of innocent victims was delivered to the gas chambers and crematoria. These were the "humanitarian policies" of the Western democracies towards the Jews during the war. I also learned that during the Nazi era Pope Pius XII, the Vicar of Christ, had made a "concordat," a peace pact with the Nazis, the enemies of Christ.

This kind of information convinced me, and many others, that the Jews have to have their own land, their own home, and not to rely on the good will of others to protect them. They have to have a land where they can defend themselves against any enemy who tries to destroy them, a land that can become a haven for Jews persecuted in any part of the world. Never should calamities as those of the Nazi era strike the Jewish people again. Furthermore, there was the urgent need to establish a Jewish homeland for the many thousands of stateless survivors of the Holocaust. I became convinced that the Zionist dream of a Jewish homeland had to be transformed into reality. I decided to make my contribution by becoming more active in the Zionist movement.

During the free evening hours I started to attend meetings at the local "Hashomer Hatsair" organization. I remembered that organization from my childhood in Czernowitz, where my sister was a member and took me occasionally to those meetings. I found the activity of the organization interesting and stimulating. Having had little exposure to my Jewish heritage in the past, I became interested in Jewish history, in the history of Zionism, as well as in Jewish culture in general. I started reading Simon Dubnow's "History of the Jews" (*Weltgeschichte des Juedischen Volkes*) and the work by Graetz on the same subject. These subjects and others were discussed in small groups (*kvutzot*), led by a group leader (*menahel*). We discussed and compared the

different ideologies within the Zionist movement, as well as left-, center-, and right wing ideologies that existed in society. These were intellectually interesting and rewarding discussions. There was also a lot of singing and hora dancing during these meetings. On those occasions I learned Hebrew songs and how to dance a hora. We often made excursions (*tiullim*) into the hills surrounding Suceava or to the ruins of the old fortress. During those excursions we learned Boy Scout skills, such as making a campfire, pitching a tent, and marking a trail. We also learned self-defense skills, using our hands, feet, and sticks. Periodically we organized a public *Oneg Shabat* with singing, dancing and recitation of poetry, at which parents were also invited. We were teenagers, boys and girls full of enthusiasm, happy to be together and to have interesting joint activities. For me it was also a welcome change from the depressing atmosphere at home.

When autumn of 1947 arrived, I had to make a difficult decision: should I return to Bucharest and continue my university studies, or stay home and help Mother take care of my father? His condition had deteriorated to the point that he could not get out of bed anymore. He had become unable even to turn in bed by himself. The doctor that used to visit my father on and off stopped seeing him, since it was nothing he could do to help. At the same time, Mother had to continue work at the canteen, to be able to bring home some food. Hiring somebody to stay with my father while mother was at work was out of the question, since mother's earnings were barely enough to pay for basic necessities. At first I could not decide what to do, since I was reluctant to give up my studies. But then I realized that in fact I had no choice. Under the circumstances, I had to stay home and take care of my father while Mother was at work.

Once I decided not to resume my university studies, I used my free time—evenings and Sundays—to get involved in other activities. I started to spend more time with Hashomer Hatzair. I became a *menahel* and guided the discussions of my *kvutza*. The topics focused mostly on Jewish history and Zionism. To pursue my old hobby, I joined a newly formed Yiddish Cultural Club that staged plays written by Yiddish playwrights. I played a variety of roles in Sholem Alehem's comedies and in Itzhak Peretz's tragedies. Occasionally, I

sang and recited Yiddish poems by Soviet-Yiddish writers or fables by Eliezer Steinbarg, the Yiddish poet from Czernowitz. I took my acting quite serious and put in considerable effort and time to make my roles a success. The audiences liked my performances, and gave me a lot of applause at the end of each show. I was elated.

The elation, however, was not to last. Fate had in store another strike for me.

During the night of the 21st to the 22d of November 1947, my mother awakened me. The light in the room was turned on, and I saw my mother's face bathed in tears. *Der Tata ist tod* (Father is dead) she said with a wailing voice. I looked in the direction of my father's bed. He lay there, his face to the wall, as if peacefully asleep. Our neighbors, who have heard mother's crying, came to our room. At dawn, one of the neighbors notified the *Chevra Kadishah*—the Jewish undertakers—and the Jewish Community Council. Soon two bearded, old men arrived, wearing black hats and black overcoats. They were the *Chevra Kadishah* men, who came to prepare my father's body for burial. According to custom, the funeral had to take place on the same day. The men in black went about their job in a business-like manner. They washed the body, put it on the floor in the middle of the room, wrapped it in white sheets, put potsherds over the eyes and mouth, and lit two candles near the head.

As I looked at the motionless body lying on the floor wrapped in white sheets, memories came back and images flashed in front of my mental eyes. I saw my father holding my hand when I was a little boy, walking with me in the Schiller park on a balmy Sunday afternoon. Treating me with a delicious ice cream cone when I came home from school with good grades. I saw him taking me to the lyceum *Aron Pumnul* to have me registered there. I remembered him on the day when he came home with tears in his eyes, telling my mother how he has been humiliated by an anti-Semitic judge in the courtroom packed with people. I saw his beaming face when he came home with the "Calotescu permit" that protected us from deportation. I also remembered the barely controlled rage on his face when the Soviet border guard robbed him of all his money and the look of despair when we arrived in Suceava and could not find a place to sleep.

Father's life has been strewn with hardships from a tender age. Raised by an aunt under difficult conditions, working hard and persevering, he was able to finish the gymnasium and later to get a law degree at the Vienna University. With his legal practice during the worldwide Depression years of the 1920s and early 1930s he was barely able to earn a modest income to support himself and his family. But his later years in life became a torment for him. He was tormented by his surroundings, by fate, cold, despair, bitterness, by a nagging cough, by his aching feet, and in the end by a paralyzing stroke. The world in which he had grown up had disintegrated and he did not know how to cope with the new environment. Deprived of the right to practice his profession by the communists and by the fascists, he had been plunged into a world without justice, without freedom, without security, a world of poverty, hatred and brutality. He had been

tormented by his inability to find his way in this strange new world and by his failing health. In the end he lived and died like a pauper.

The subdued crying of my mother brought me back to reality. The sheet-wrapped body on the floor seemed much smaller than I remembered my father. Did death shrink his body, or was it the illness that did it? In any case, his suffering was now over. At noon a peasant brought a wooden casket on a horse-dawn cart, sent by the Jewish Community Association. The casket was a simple pine box with a lid and holes in the bottom, in compliance with Orthodox tradition. The *Chevra Kedisha* people put the body in the casket, closed the lid, and left it on the floor in the middle of the room. Mother and I sat down on footstools on each side of the casket. A few of our neighbors sat behind us, talking to each other in subdued voices.

The funeral took place later in the afternoon. Only a small group of people followed the hearse. There were our neighbors and some of my friends from Hashomer Hatzair as well as from the Yiddish Club. At the cemetery, the rabbi gave a brief speech, praising the deceased and evoking the suffering during his life. After I said *Kaddish*, the casket was lowered into the grave. Mother and I threw a handful of earth on top of it. That was the end of the funeral ceremony. We walked home exhausted, without saying a word, each with our own thoughts and sorrow.

After sitting *shiva* for a week, I had to decide what to do next. Should I return to Bucharest to continue my university studies, or should I stay home with my mother? School had already started two months earlier, and it would have been difficult to catch up with lost lectures and laboratory work. Furthermore, I did not want to leave mother all by herself immediately after my father's death. I felt I should stay with her for some time before leaving home. I was also deeply involved with the Hashomer organization, and was reluctant to abandon all the young people with whom I had established close ties in the months past. Considering all these factors, I decided to stay home for the time being, and to continue my activity in the youth organization and in the Yiddish Cultural Club.

Having now more free time, I performed more often on stage with my colleagues from the Yiddish Cultural Club. I took on more difficult roles and took my acting very serious. But most of my time I spent in the youth organization, giving lectures on different subjects that varied from Jewish history to the evolution of the human society. I read some good books on these subjects, and I came well prepared for these lectures.

At that time I had my first girlfriend. Her name was Bianka. She was one of the *tzoffim* in the youth organization, and was a member of the group under my guidance. Her braided, shiny, black hair contrasted with her milk-white complexion. She had big dark eyes with long black lashes slightly tilted at the end, a finely chiseled face, and a perfectly shaped small nose. There was a touch of rosy-pink on her pale cheeks, while her full lips were cherry-red. A somewhat shy smile that exuded innocence enhanced her charm. Bianka was beautiful. People turned their heads when she walked on the street in the company of other girls, laughing carefree and showing her pearl-white teeth. She was fifteen at the time and many boys in their late teens wanted to go out with her. Her mother, however, kept a close eye on her social life, and Bianka went out only with the boys her mother approved of. Since her mother knew me from the youth organization as fairly serious, she let Bianka go out with me.

Our friendship was very innocent and platonic. Was it love? I don't know. Maybe at that time I didn't know what love is. But I know that we both were eager to see each other and enjoyed being together. We spent most of our time together with the boys and girls in the organization. Then we went home together, since we lived on the same street. Occasionally we went for a walk or sat on a bench in the central park. We both were somewhat shy and did not talk much. The closest we got was holding hands in the park or putting my arm around her shoulder when we danced the *hora*. Sometimes we went to see a movie together, and in the darkness I mustered the courage to give her a brief kiss on the cheek.

My feelings towards Bianka were tender. Just holding her hand or kissing her on the cheek made me content. Although I was already 19 years old, I was shy and felt awkward in dealing with girls. Bianka, in turn, was lively when we were in a larger group, but became shy when only the two of us were together. We both didn't quite know how to deal with the opposite sex in an intimate situation. During our walks I told her about life in the big city, Bucharest, about the tall buildings, the wide tree-lined boulevards, the tramcars, and the numerous movie houses. When I finished telling her about the "wonders" of the big city, she looked at me seriously with her big, dark eyes, and said: "Someday I hope to be able to see the big city together with you." At that time it was the dream of every small-town girl to see Bucharest, the "Paris of the East" as it was called.

While I was in Suceava, enjoying the company of my *chaverim* and performing on the stage of the Yiddish theatre, significant political changes took place in the

country. Towards the end of 1947 the communists had decided that the time had come to gain absolute power over the country. After dissolving the opposition National Peasant Party and arresting its leaders, they dropped from the government Gheorghe Tatarescu and his faction of the National Liberal Party. In the fall of 1944, Tatarescu had split the old National Liberal Party and his faction joined the Groza government in March 1945. By joining the government, Tatarescu had hoped to moderate the communist influence in the country. The communists accepted the alliance with the Tatarescu faction in the Groza government, and used it to prove the "democratic" nature of that government. By the end of 1947 the communists had no more use for these road companions, and removed them from the government. The Social Democratic Party suffered a similar fate. A splinter group of the party had joined the Groza government and was subsequently absorbed by the Communist Party. The communists later dissolved the remainder of the Social Democratic Party, and arrested its leader, Titel Petrescu.

From the end of the war until the end of 1947, thousands of Jews left the country, and tried to find their way to Palestine. Among them were many of those who returned from Transnistria or who came from Northern Bukovina and Bessarabia, now reoccupied by the Soviet Union. They were paupers who saw emigration as the only way to a brighter future. The deteriorating economic situation in the country also drove many Jews to emigration.

Most of them crossed illegally the border into Hungary, and from there went on to Austria and Italy. Initially, the Romanian authorities did not prevent the clandestine crossing of the border, since it left fewer mouths to feed in the country. Towards the end of 1947, however, the policy changed. People caught trying to cross the border illegally were arrested. Those who still were able to reach Hungary were turned over by the Hungarian authorities to Romania. Those arrested were tried and convicted to years in prison.

In November 1947, Dr. W. Filderman, who headed the Federation of Jewish Communities of Romania, found out that the government was preparing a "case" against him, accusing him of being a British spy. He fled the country before he could be arrested. A month later, Chief Rabbi Dr. Alexandru Safran was expelled from the country, and replaced by the communist-approved Rabbi Moses Rosen.

By the end of 1947, the last bastion of the old regime still untouched was the monarchy. Since the fall of the Antonescu regime and the stationing of Soviet troops in Romania, King Mihai (Michael) had tried in vain to install a democratic government.

Under relentless communist pressure, he lost more and more influence in matters of state. Eventually, his turn came. Having eliminated all opposition parties, the communists felt that the time had come to finally remove the monarchy. On December 30, 1947, Prime-Minister Groza and First- Secretary of the Communist Party, Gheorghiu-Dej, requested an audience with the King. In polite terms they advised him that, for the good of the country, he should abdicate and leave the country. In return, the government would allow him to leave with a train of several railway cars filled with valuables from his palaces in Bucharest and Sinaia. Several hours later, realizing that the presence of several hundred thousand Soviet soldiers in the country would make any resistance on his part futile, the King signed the abdication. On the same day Romania was declared a People's Republic. The new name given the country was *Republica Populara Romana* (The Romanian People's Republic), abbreviated RPR. On January 3, 1948, the former King left the country by train for Switzerland.

Now that the monarchy had been removed and the Communist Party had a monopoly of power in the country, the implementation of Stalinist economic principles was accelerated. The ultimate objective was to transform the country's economy into a socialist economy, using the Soviet model. In 1948, most major enterprises in the country were nationalized. The areas affected included heavy industry, mining, banks, and health institutions. Joint Soviet-Romanian enterprises, named Sovrom, were set up, which siphoned off a significant amount of wealth from Romania to the Soviet Union. In the same year, the first economic one-year plan was put into effect.

The communists also began to implement Stalinist political principles. According to those principles, the class struggle had to be "intensified." The old bourgeoisie and landowner elite, as well as the intellectual elite had to be eliminated. Any opposition to the building of the new society and the new man had to be crushed. To help implement these principles, the security police (*Securitate*) was established in 1948. A new constitution was adopted, following the model of the Stalinist constitution. In the name of intensified class struggle, repression spread to every segment of society. The "progressive", Stalinist method of forced labor was introduced and diligently applied to the "enemies of the people." Former owners and managers of large enterprises, land owners with large estates, spiritual leaders, top intellectuals and other old-time dignitaries were arrested and put in jails or labor camps. The purge of "unreliable elements" in the universities was intensified.

In addition to economic upheaval and political repression, the country was hit by a terrible drought in 1946 and 1947. That natural disaster created an acute shortage of food and starvation in many parts of the country. It also exacerbated the rampant inflation and rapid devaluation of the leu, the local currency. The monetary reform (*stabilizare*) implemented by the government in the summer of 1947 dealt a hard blow to a large segment of the population. The government allowed each person to exchange only a small amount of old money for new money. After the monetary reform, the old money became worthless. The reform had a devastating effect on the well to do and the middle class, whose money became worthless overnight. The monetary reform also bankrupted most small businesses that were still in existence at that time. The reform was especially painful to the Jewish population, since Jews owned many of the small businesses established after the war.

In our family, Uncle Joseph was hit hard by the monetary reform. In the two years since he had come to Bucharest and worked for his friend in the paper business, he had been able to save some money. He lived very frugal and was trying to save enough to start his own business. The monetary reform wiped out all his savings. He never recovered from that blow. One year after the monetary reform the company he worked for was nationalized and his friend arrested. From that point on, his income barely sufficed to cover the cost of basic necessities for himself and for Aunt Ruchel.

During those turbulent and difficult times, while the communist dictatorship was tightening its grip on the country, news arrived that rekindled the hope and brought joy to the Jews of Romania. The good news came from an unlikely place: the United Nations.

On November 29, 1947, The United Nations General Assembly voted for a resolution, partitioning Palestine into an Arab and Jewish State. Jews all over the world rejoiced. The two thousand-year-old dream of the Jewish people finally came true. In Suceava, the "Hashomer", as well as all other Zionist organizations, organized meetings and festivities to celebrate this historic event. I led the discussions of this event with my *kvutza*. We talked about the historic importance of the United Nations decision, about the role of the *kibutzim* in establishing "facts" on the ground in Palestine, about the Hagana--the Jewish defense force--that protected the kibutzim from Arab attacks. We also talked about the Jewish *olim* (Immigrants) detained by the British military in the camps of Cyprus that will finally have a home of their own. At the

end of the discussions we sang Hebrew songs and danced the hora late into the night. We were full of enthusiasm, looking forward to the establishment of the Jewish State.

A few months later, the British started to pull out their troops from Palestine, and on May 15, 1948, Ben Gurion declared the establishment of the State of Israel. The Jews of Suceava were overjoyed. They gathered on the streets, in synagogues, and at the meeting places of the different Zionist organizations to discuss the news. Public meetings were organized to celebrate this event. In Suceava, like in many other cities and towns of Romania with a Jewish population, the Communist Party organized such a meeting. The Romanian Communist Party, as did communist parties in other countries, supported the partition of Palestine and the creation of a Jewish State, since they saw this as a blow to British imperialism. The party invited the population of Suceava to participate at the meeting, and also decided who the speakers will be. Two of the selected speakers were party members, and a third, a Jewish teacher, had no political affiliation. The party also wanted a speaker from a Zionist organization, and invited me to speak at the meeting. Even the leaders of the local Communist Party realized that it would be outright ridiculous to celebrate the creation of a Jewish State in Palestine without having at least one speaker from a Zionist organization. Besides, the party still needed the support of the Jewish population, which they knew had strong, pro-Zionist feelings. They selected me as speaker because I had a leading position in the left leaning Zionist youth organization.

One day before the meeting the speakers were invited to the office of the local party organization and given an outline of the speeches they were supposed to deliver. On the day of the meeting, a large crowd gathered in the only open-air theatre in the city. Most in attendance were Jews. Since the party had organized the meeting, leading local party and government members had been invited, and sat in the front row. The regional party secretary opened the meeting. Then, the other speakers got up and spoke. Each followed closely the script received the previous day. Even the non-communist speaker delivered his speech in accordance to the outline received from the party, since he did not want to jeopardize his job. Each speaker praised the Romanian Communist Party and the Groza government, thanking them for the freedom they have brought to the country and to its Jewish population. They proclaimed their dedication to the cause of socialism and vowed to work hard to build a socialist society in Romania. The creation of the State of Israel was mentioned only in passing, as if it would be of no relevance to the

Jewish community of Romania. The audience sat passively throughout these speeches and applauded politely at the end.

I was the last speaker. At my request, the party representative allowed me to speak in Yiddish--the only Yiddish speaker at the meeting. I knew that most in the audience would prefer to hear the speech in *mame loshen*, rather than in Romanian. I decided to ignore the script provided by the party and prepared my own speech. I knew that I am the only speaker who can say something meaningful about the event we were supposed to celebrate. At the time I had no job to risk losing. I knew what was on the mind and in the heart of the Jewish audience gathered in front of me, what the people wanted to hear on this historic occasion. When I rose, I spoke about the fulfillment of the two thousand-year-old dream of the Jewish people, about the persecutions throughout the centuries, about Theodor Herzel and the *halutzim* who build the land. I talked about deserts and marshes turned into cultivated fields, about the struggle against British imperialism, about the survivors of the Holocaust in the "displaced persons" camps that finally will have a homeland. I had intended to conclude my speech saying something about the Jews of Romania and about their gratefulness to the party. However, I got carried away with my speech, forgot to praise the party, and concluded with "Long live the new Jewish State!"

It was a strong, eloquent speech, delivered with conviction and enthusiasm. While the other speakers read their party-prepared speeches with a monotonous, unconvincing voice, I spoke freely, without script, and said what I felt the majority in the audience wanted to hear. It was a speech that came from the heart and was addressed to the hearts of the people.

I got a standing ovation. Even the non-Jewish dignitaries in the first row smiled and applauded, although they did not understand much of my speech in Yiddish. After the meeting, people who knew my mother embraced her and congratulated her for having such a "terrific" son. Others congratulated me for having the courage to express freely what many of them thought and felt in their hearts, but did not dare to say. I felt very proud of myself after the meeting. Not only because I pleased the crowd, but also because I had the courage not to give in to the dictate of the party. It was one of the best days of my life.

In the fall of 1948, at the beginning of a new school year, I had to decide whether or not to return to Bucharest and continue my university studies. It was not an easy decision to make. I had become accustomed to being together with my friends in the

youth organization, to the interesting seminars and discussions we had, and to the excursions we made regularly into the surrounding hills and forests. Naturally, I enjoyed being together with Bianka, and did not want to be separated from her. I had also grown accustomed to being active in the Yiddish drama club, to play the main roles in different plays we performed, and to enjoy the enthusiastic applause at the end of each performance. Furthermore, I knew that it was easier for mother if I stayed with her. She still worked at the OSE canteen, but had no friends and few acquaintances. If I left, I knew she would be lonely.

I had to think about my future, however. If I stayed with the organization, eventually I would have emigrated to the newly created State of Israel, and, having no higher education or other skills I would have ended up in a kibutz. I was also tempted to study drama to become a professional actor. But a stage director at the Bucharest Yiddish theatre, who visited Suceava, advised me against it. He told me about the hard work required to be a good actor, the tough competition that actors face, and the risk of an uncertain financial future. Moreover, the drastic political changes that took place in the country made the future for an actor even less predictable.

After weighing carefully all the facts, I decided to resume my studies. Mother also encouraged me to continue my university studies. I returned to Bucharest and registered at the university for the fall semester of the second year. Although I had interrupted my studies for one year, I was accepted. My case was not unique. Due to the chaotic situation in the country, many students had to interrupt their studies. Some returned to complete their studies, while others did not.

When I went to register for my second year at the department of physics and chemistry, I found out that the department did not exist anymore. It had been split into two departments: one for physics, and one for chemistry. A commission had been set up to divide the students between the two departments. I was assigned to the chemistry department, although I pointed out to the commission that I was primarily interested in physics. The commission, made up of party members, had made the decision based on its own criteria, and that decision was final. Rumor had it that the quota set aside for students of middle-class origin like myself, had already been filled in the physics department. Whatever the reason, my future profession was decided by the party, and not by me. Although I felt little attraction for chemistry at the time, reluctantly I became a chemistry student. Only during the following years did I gradually acquire more interest in

chemistry, and eventually discovered the many beautiful aspects of that science, both in its theory and in practice.

After registering at the university, I submitted an application to the Student Council in charge of student dormitories. The government had converted several nationalized buildings into student dormitories for students that came from the provinces to study in Bucharest. These students were unable to find any accommodations in the city due to the severe housing shortage. I was accepted and assigned to a dormitory not far from the university. I was glad that I did not have to burden anymore Uncle Joseph and Aunt Ruchel, to share with them their cramped, tiny apartment.

The three-story dormitory had mostly large rooms, each with eight or ten beds. There were a few smaller rooms, with two beds each that were assigned to senior students and party activists. The hallways were long and smelled of cleaning liquid. I was assigned to a ten-bed room. The room had bare whitewashed walls and two large windows facing the street. One electric globe hang from the ceiling. Five iron beds stood next to one of the walls and facing them were another five beds along the opposite wall. Each student was given a straw mattress, pillow and linen, as well as a small night table and chair. The students kept most of their belongings in suitcases under the bed. Shoes were placed next to the suitcases. There was one common closet in the room for overcoats and suits. Since most of the students smoked and changed their socks and underwear only once a week, the air was heavy with the smell of perspiration mingled with tobacco smoke. Occasionally, there was a whiff of *rakiu* (Romanian plum brandy) in the air, when one of the students sneaked in a bottle of this stuff and decided to share it with his buddies.

The dormitory had a reading room for studying, a large shower room, and a cafeteria. The walls of the reading room were decorated with pictures of party and government leaders: Gheorghiu-Dej, Petru Groza, and Anna Pauker. There were also slogans on the walls, praising the "Romanian Workers Party" (the new name of the Communist Party) and exhorting the students to build a socialist society. The shower room had hot water allotted for only two hours each evening. Since there were several hundred students in the building, we had to stand in line before we could take a shower. Groups of two or three would cram under a showerhead so that we would be assured of warm water. That led to a lot of pushing and shoving under the shower. The cafeteria served three meals daily. The main meal, served at noontime, usually consisted of watery

vegetable soup and a dish of boiled potatoes or cornmeal (*mamaliga*) with cheese. The food was far from sufficient, and each student had to supplement his diet or stay hungry.

My roommates were mostly from rural areas, brought to Bucharest by the party for studies. They came from poor peasant families, and had spent most of their life in small villages. They kept to themselves and only occasionally did we talk to each other. Never did we talk politics, a subject all of us carefully avoided.

To have some pocket money and be able to buy additional food and clothing, I started to work at night at the railroad station. I unloaded freight cars of lumber, crates filled with machine parts, wooden boxes of furniture, sacks of potatoes or onions, and anything else that happened to arrive that night by train. Together with several colleagues I worked three nights a week, from 8 p.m. until midnight. The pay was a pittance, and the work was backbreaking. Carrying a forty-pound sack of potatoes on my back from the rail car to a waiting truck felt like carrying a ton of rocks on my shoulders. At the end of the night shift my back was aching, my shoulders were bruised, and I had to drag myself back to the dormitory for a few hours of sleep. The day following the night work I had to struggle to keep my eyes open during the lectures. I did this work for several months. With the money I earned I was able to supplement my food during that time period and to save enough to buy a warm jacket and pants for the cold season. When the end of the semester neared and I had to prepare myself for the exams, I gave up the night work.

The curriculum at the chemistry department was quite heavy. We had to take a variety of courses in chemistry—inorganic, organic, analytical—as well as courses in physics and mathematics. None of these courses were easy, and required long hours of study. Some of the courses, such as the course in inorganic chemistry taught by Professor Gheorghe Spacu, required considerable memorizing. There were also long hours of laboratory work, mostly in analytical chemistry and physics.

In addition to science, all students were required to take ideological courses. I had to study Marxism-Leninism that included the history of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, as well as the basic works of Lenin and Stalin. I also took a course in dialectic and historic materialism.

Older professors with a well-established reputation in their field taught the science courses. These professors belonged to the old academic elite. The most prominent among them was Professor G. Spacu for inorganic chemistry and Professor E. Angelescu for organic chemistry. They had been professors under the old regime,

and therefore were not completely trusted politically by the new university administration. An exception was Professor C. Murgulescu for physical chemistry, a capable and experienced scientist, who also was a party member. He later became Minister of Education in the communist government.

A new breed of lecturers taught the ideological courses. They came from a completely revamped philosophy department, where younger communist intellectuals had replaced the old-time philosophy professors. Many of those young intellectuals also occupied high positions in the party apparatus, and some of them were members of the Central Committee.

I spent most of my time studying. I attended lectures, worked in different chemistry and physics laboratories, and spent the rest of my time in the university library. After a year of interruption it took an extra effort to get back into the studying mode. At least once a week we had political meetings in the evening. At these meetings party officials gave presentations regarding national or international events. To avoid any misunderstandings, the officials gave the "proper" Marxist-Leninist interpretation of these events. On other occasions, an editorial article in the party newspaper *Scanteia* was collectively read and discussed. After these discussions the party officials often presented the audience body with "resolutions" written in the name of the students and addressed to the party leadership or government. These resolutions gave enthusiastic support to the latest government or party decision, condemned some action by Western "imperialists," or expressed solidarity with those oppressed in foreign countries struggling against capitalist exploiters. The students had to express their approval through applause or raising of hands. The approval rate was always 100 percent. The "approval" was, obviously, a sham. Any student who would have voted against a party resolution or would have abstained from voting would have been promptly questioned by the party secretary about his motives, and then expelled from the university.

At that time there were three major holidays that were celebrated with great pomp at party-organized meetings and demonstrations. They were the May Day celebration, the festivities of the 23d of August, and the 7$^{th}$ of November anniversary. The May Day or First of May, of American origin, celebrated the International Day of Workers' Solidarity, and was observed in all communist and many non-communist countries. On the 23d of August the country celebrated the day when Romania overthrew the fascist dictatorship of Ion Antonescu in 1944 and replaced it with an anti-Nazi government. The third major holiday, the 7$^{th}$ of November, commemorated the victory of the Bolshevik Revolution in

1917. All three communist holidays were celebrated with mass demonstrations in front of party and government officials, demonstrations designed to express support for the party and its leaders, praise for the Soviet Union, and solidarity with the working people worldwide. The 23d of August celebration was also accompanied by a military parade

Most people looked forward to those holidays. The reason was not the eagerness to demonstrate in front of the party leaders and to yell slogans dictated by the party organization. There was a much simpler reason. Several days before those celebrations, the stores –especially the food store—were stocked with items that were not available during the rest of the year: Russian red caviar, Norwegian sardines, Greek olives, American Nylon stockings, Swedish razorblades, and Italian shoes. There were long lines for those items, but they were available only those few days before a holiday. Once the holiday was over, the merchandise disappeared from the store.

On those holidays, the university students had to meet in front of the university early in the morning. Directed by party members, students and professors from each department were organized into columns, ten people abreast. In different parts of town other columns were formed by school children dressed in their "Pioneer" uniforms, sportsmen dressed in white, factory workers wearing their Sunday best, and employees from almost every state enterprise in town. The atmosphere was relaxed and most people were in high spirits, since it was a day off and nobody took the whole thing too serious. We were given a variety of large pictures and red banners to carry during the demonstration. The pictures were those of Gheorghiu-Dej, Anna Pauker, Teohari Georgescu, and other leaders of the Romanian Workers Party, as well as those of Joseph Stalin and of other communist leaders. The red banners carried slogans such as "Long live the Romanian Workers Party," "Long live the eternal friendship between the Romanian and Soviet peoples" (they always used the word "eternal" when they talked about the friendship with the Soviet people), and "Long live the international solidarity of working people." The different columns started marching towards Piata Aviatorilor (the Aviators' Square) where a large official stand had been erected the day before. The stand was wrapped in red fabric and decorated with flying red flags and the Romanian blue-yellow-red flags. On the way to the stand we passed streets adorned with red and national flags, hanging from lampposts and windows. On many buildings there were red banners with political slogans praising the party and its leaders. Pictures of Romanian communist leaders and of Stalin were everywhere: on buildings, in store windows, even on lampposts. The streets were lined with a thin crowd of onlookers, mostly elderly

people who did not have to participate in the demonstration. When our column finally reached the official stand, we saw it packed with party and government officials, who had gathered to review the demonstration. While a military band played patriotic music, we marched in front of the stand with our pictures and banners, while trying to get a glimpse of our leaders. They, in turn, smiled and waved at us. Everybody knew what to do: we had to show our enthusiasm for our leaders, and they had to wave at us. After passing in front of the official stand, the pictures of our leaders, those of Stalin and the banners with slogans were dumped into a waiting truck and the columns disbanded. The rest of the day was spent in leisure. Some people went to a park, others took the bus to lake Herestrau, while others went home to rest. The amount of liquor consumed on such holidays was quite significant. There was a smell of *rakiu* – a cheap alcoholic drink—and of beer in the air. In the evening, people who were sober enough watched the fire works.

From my student years I remember an episode that makes me smile even today. While doing some experiments in the laboratory, I often sang to myself even in the presence of other students. I had picked up that habit as a child from my mother, when she was singing while cooking or cleaning house. Although I was singing in a subdued voice, the assistant-supervisor of the lab enjoyed my singing. My colleagues working next to me usually made some ironic remarks, but that did not bother me. It was one instance, however, when my singing almost affected my future career. During a mid-semester test I had to analyze the composition of a mixture of chemicals. The night before I had worked at the rail station unloading sacks of potatoes, and during the day I was dead tired. That, evidently, affected my ability to do the analysis. After working for several hours on my analysis, I handed over the results to the assistant-supervisor, an energetic and outspoken woman. She looked at the sheet with my results, compared them with the data she had in her notebook, and then turned to me. “The results of the analysis are not good, to put it mildly,” she said. After a short pause, she continued: “You know, Scherzer, you have a nice and pleasant voice. Maybe you should consider studying canto instead of chemistry.” She then turned and walked away. I was shocked. I did not know if she was serious or sarcastic. In any case, I decided to do some inquiring. I went to the university’s music department and talked to one of the canto teachers. I told him that I am a chemistry student and would like to know if I might have a more promising future by studying canto. He replied that he would have to test my voice first. We walked into an empty room in the music department and the teacher asked me to sing for him a song of my choice. I chose a Russian song that I still remembered from

high school. After listening to my singing for about two minutes, the teacher stopped me. "You have a nice voice," he said, "but you will definitely have a better future by studying chemistry." I followed his advice and continued my studies in chemistry. I decided not to tell anybody about the supervisor's remark or about my meeting with the canto teacher. I also decided to get a good night's sleep before a test

On Sundays I usually went to see a movie or visited Uncle Joseph, Aunt Ruchel, and my grandfather, Aba Neumann. After grandmother died in early 1950, grandfather left Czernowitz and moved to Bucharest. He was unable to find lodging, and had to move in with my uncle and aunt in their one-room apartment. Whenever I visited them I found the room so cramped that it required the dexterity of an acrobat to move around without bumping into people or furniture. Still, I enjoyed my conversations with grandfather and Uncle Joseph. During those conversations Ruchel sat quietly on a chair, knitting a sweater or a pair of socks for Joseph, while listening to our talk. We talked about the political situation in the country and in the world, about the newly created Jewish State, about the outlook for Jewish emigration. It was one of the few occasions when I could express my opinions freely, without fear of informers. With grandfather I talked about the meaning of different Jewish holidays, about various Jewish traditions, about the Kabala. At the end of my visit I was enthralled by grandfather's wisdom and knowledge. Even today I think of him with admiration and great respect

My social life at the time was quite limited. I was just too busy with my studies to find time to socialize. Occasionally, on a nice sunny day, I took the tramcar to the lake Herestrau, rented a boat and spent some time on the lake. The rowing was good exercise for me, and the fresh air helped clear my mind. It also drove off the smell of chemicals that permeated my cloths and was in my nostrils after the long hours spent in the laboratory.

Sometimes I went to a symphonic concert at the Athenaeum Palace. The Athenaeum was a beautiful structure in the center of the city, facing the former Royal Palace. It was built in circular form in the classical style, with imposing Greek columns guarding the main entrance. In the interior, frescoes depicting scenes from Romanian history had been covered with red fabric, since some of the scenes showed Romanian royalty. Evidently such images could not be shown publicly in a proletarian society. Some people might get the wrong idea that Romanian royalty had played a positive role in the country's past

Some of my fondest memories from those years are those of concerts attended at the Athenaeum Palace. The concerts took place Saturday evening and Sunday afternoon, and were usually sold out. I began to grow fond of classical music, and listened to this music often on the radio. At the Athenaeum I heard for the first time the works of Mozart, Beethoven, Brahms and Tchaikovsky in live performances, with the well-liked Romanian conductors George Georgescu, Constantin Silvestri, and Sergiu Comissiona. Foreign soloists often came to perform at the Athenaeum. One of the most significant musical events took place in 1953 during an international youth festival organized in Bucharest. During the festival the Romanian Symphonic Orchestra performed Bach's concerto for two violins and orchestra, with soloists David Oistrach and Yehudi Menuhim. It was one of the finest musical performances I have ever attended. The public was ecstatic. I also attended concerts with pianist Sveatoslav Richter, violinist Igor Oistrach, and conductor Claudio Abbado. I enjoyed as much watching the performers as listening to them. During one of the Beethoven's symphonies directed by a very energetic guest conductor, the baton escaped from his hand and flew into the concert hall, hitting an elderly bald man on his shoulder. The audience laughed, the conductor turned a smiling face to the public, then finished conducting the concert without baton. The man hit by the baton was amused. There were no lawyers in the audience and nobody was sued.

In the summer of 1949, at the end of the school year, I returned to Suceava. I was glad to be back home and to see my mother. After eating for many months in the student cafeteria watery soup and *mamaliga* (a paste made of corn meal) with cheese, I was looking forward to have some good food at home. Mother was happy to see me, and treated me with a lavish meal: old fashion borscht with sour cream and hot potatoes, fried chicken with vegetables, and delicious fruit compote, complements of the Joint. As a student who had been hungry more often than not, I surely could enjoy a good meal. Talking to my mother I found out that the OSE canteen where mother worked had been taken over by the government and its management replaced. To have a private Jewish-American philanthropic organization run a canteen in the Romanian Peoples Republic was unacceptable to the government. Mother was kept on her job, but now she worked for the government. After the takeover, the food served in the canteen had deteriorated, since most of the food sent from the U.S. was siphoned off to other organizations.

Furthermore, having lost control of the food distribution, the Joint reduced significantly the amount of food sent to the canteen.

The second day after my return to Suceava I met Bianka. We had exchanged letters during my stay in Bucharest, but during the last few months her letters were slow in coming. Only in Suceava did I learn that she was going out with a number of young men, and that she had a new boyfriend. I was disappointed, but not surprised. I knew that a girl with her charm would have many suitors. I also knew that being far away for a long time made it difficult for both of us to maintain a close friendship. Still, we remained friends and were glad to see each other. She later married a young man from Suceava, who studied medicine. Her mother's dream to have a doctor son-in-law came true.

It was at the Cultural Club that I met a young woman, whom I shall call Mira. She was in her early thirties, had dark curly hair, bright chestnut-brown eyes, and a delicately shaped mouth. She was originally from Balti, a small town in Bessarabia, where she had been married to a salesman. At the beginning of the war she and her husband were deported to Bershad in Transnistria. Several months later her husband died of typhus. Mira survived by working in the fields, helping the local peasants with the harvest in return for food. After the war she came to Czernowitz together with friends she had made in Bershad. When the Soviets opened the border to Romania, she left Czernowitz and settled in Suceava. She found a job as an office clerk, and lived in a rented room with a Jewish family. Since she was interested in acting, she joined the Cultural Club.

The director of the club decided to stage a historical play, and assigned to Mira and to me the main roles. I had the role of a military commander, while Mira had the role of a princess, the king's daughter. In the play, the commander and the princess fell in love with each other, but the king promises the commander the hand of his daughter only if he will be victorious in the upcoming battle. The commander returned victorious from the battle and married the princess. Although Mira was about fifteen years older than I was, we were hoping that the proper makeup would make the age difference less obvious.

Our group of actors met several evenings in Mira's room, sat around the table, and read aloud the lines each of us was supposed to say. Once we had become familiar with our lines, we began to act. There were several scenes just between Mira and me, and she suggested to me that the two of us rehears these scenes separately from the group. I agreed and went to her place the following evening. Mira served me a cup of

tea, and then we began rehearsing. The rehearsal went smoothly until we reached the scene when the script required that I kiss her. In previous rehearsals, when other people were present, I kissed Mira on the cheek. Now, however, when I tried to kiss her on the cheek, Mira said with a smile: "The play requires that the commander kisses the princes on her mouth, not on the cheek." I hesitated, since never before had I kissed a woman on the mouth. Then, with my lips pressed together, I touched her lips rather clumsily. "Not this way," she said with a short laugh, "let me show you how to kiss." She pressed her soft lips against mine, closed her eyes, parted my lips with her tongue and our tongues met. She wrapped her right hand around my neck and pressed gently my head towards hers, while playing with the tip of her tongue inside my mouth. I felt a heat wave sweeping my body; never before have I had a sensation of such intensity. I had seen people kissing in the movies, but had no idea what feelings a kiss can bring alive. At first I was surprised and afraid. I did not know what to do, how to react. But as she pressed herself towards me, when I could smell her hair and feel the warmth of her body, I threw my arms around her body. When I started to move my hands over her body, she detached herself from me and said with a smile: "Wait. Let's make ourselves more comfortable." Only then did I realize that she was wearing a house robe, not a dress or skirt. She took off her robe, while I undressed quickly. Apparently captivated by an inexperienced youth, she led me to the sofa. Without a word, she put her arms around me and drew me down to her in a mute embrace. She began moving her soft hand over my body, while she kissed my face, my eyes and my mouth. Mira let me explore her soft body with my hands and mouth. I felt overwhelmed with desire and happiness, while my body was on fire. Every touch, every kiss of hers excited me. When my excitement reached its peak, she guided me into her. The sensation I felt was overpowering. It was as if a high-tension electric current flashed through my whole being. I closed my eyes tight and tried to control myself, to hold back. But I couldn't. I exploded in her, while a loud scream came from my lips. She covered my mouth with her soft hand so that the neighbors won't hear me. "Shhh," she said in a hushed voice, a vague smile gracing her lips. Exhausted, drained of all my energy, I collapsed next to her, deeply inhaling the smell of her hair and body, while touching with my lips the milk-white skin of her shoulder. I had lost my innocence. It was my first sexual experience, one of those exhilarating experiences in life that cannot be forgotten.

After that evening I felt the need to be more often together with Mira. When the other actors were present we tried to keep the appearance of two people just interested

in the play. In the absence of other people, we rehearsed and then made love. With her guidance the lovemaking lasted longer and became more and more enjoyable. I felt drawn closer to her every time we were together. Finally, the day arrived when we had to perform the play in public. Before the performance I had some trepidation, but the performance went flawless. At the end the public applauded with enthusiasm.

Several days after the performance I met Mira on the street. We spoke briefly about the success of our play, and then I asked her, in a somewhat awkward way, if I might visit her in the evening. "I am now very busy at the office," she replied, "and I have to work also evenings." From her tone of voice I realized that she had lost interest in seeing me. I was puzzled. Didn't she want to be intimate with me anymore due to my lack of experience? Or did she have someone else? Only several weeks later, after we performed another play and we left the theater together did she explain her change in attitude. Mira had realized that I was beginning to get emotionally involved with her. She said she liked me very much and did not want to hurt me. Since she was fifteen years older and had more life experience, she felt that is was best that we do not meet in private anymore. Reluctantly, I accepted her explanation. Our brief affaire had come to an end. Later on, I realized that she had made the right decision. We remained friends and continued to perform on stage together. After returning to Bucharest I had no more contact with her. A year later, when emigration became again possible, Mira left for Israel. I was told that she married there an immigrant from Romania.

There was considerable agitation in the Jewish community. Emigration to Israel was on everybody's mind. After the establishment of the State of Israel, the Romanian government had changed its attitude towards emigration, and allowed the Jews to register with a government agency to obtain an emigration passports. They could also apply for an immigration visa at the Israeli embassy in Bucharest. As soon as the new policy became known by word of mouth—the government-controlled newspapers would never print such information—the Jews started lining up in front of government buildings to register for emigration. In every city with a Jewish population long lines of people could be seen waiting patiently to register. The intensive anti-emigration propaganda carried out by the communist-controlled Jewish Democratic Committee had little effect. The majority of the Jewish population was made up of small merchants, craftsmen, and intellectuals, which were unemployed or had modest incomes. Many were leading a

marginal existence. They were impoverished by years of fascist persecution and later by the monetary reform, and suffered from a shortage of food, housing, and other basic necessities of life. Under those conditions, many Jews felt that they may have a brighter future in the newly established Jewish State. This applied especially to the Jews from Northern Bukovina and Bessarabia, who lived mostly in abject poverty.

Many Jews felt that a strong anti-Semitic undercurrent persisted in Romanian society. Officially, anti-Semitism had been prohibited. But many years of fascist and rightist rule had inoculated the poison of anti-Semitism into the Romanian masses, and their mentality could not be changed overnight. The fact that Jews occupied many key positions in the party also contributed to the resentment.

The activity of different Zionist organizations that flourished in the years after the war had had a strong influence on the Jewish population, especially among the young. A significant number of Jews became convinced that only a Jewish homeland could protect the Jews from future persecutions. As a result of all these factors, in the years 1948 and 1949 the Israeli embassy in Bucharest was flooded with visa applications. Thousands of Jews received Romanian passports and left the country legally. I discussed the subject of emigration with my mother. From Bertha's letters and from those written by newly arrived immigrants we knew that life in Israel was very difficult at that time. Bertha lived in a *tzrif* (wooden cabin) with Shmuel and her first-born child, Rachel. Shmuel struggled to support his family by working long hours. New immigrants had difficulties finding jobs and housing. The wounds from the war of independence were still fresh, and another war could break out any time. In view of this situation, Mother insisted that I finish my university studies before applying for an emigration visa. She assured me that she would also stay in Romania as long as I remained there. After considering the pro and cons, I decided to follow Mother's advice. Only after I finished my studies, in two more years, we planned to apply for emigration visas to Israel.

The lenient attitude of the Romanian government towards emigration, however, did not last very long. Stung by the failure of its policies among the Jewish masses and outraged by the large number of people that applied for emigration visas, the government reversed course. The Zionist organizations were accused of agitation among Jews and were disbanded. Leaders of Zionist organizations were arrested. An intense anti-Israeli propaganda campaign was started in newspapers and meetings. Party activists replaced leaders of the Jewish communities. By the end of 1949, emigration to Israel had come to a halt.

The last two years of my university studies went by fast. In spite of hard work and difficult exams, I found time to make regular excursions into the mountains, mostly on weekends and during the winter vacation. At the university I met several Jewish students with whom I established a close friendship. Some of them were my colleagues in the chemistry department, while others were from other departments. Most of our excursions were made into the Bucegi Mountains north of Bucharest. The Bucegi are part of the Carpatian Mountain range that separates the "Old Kingdom" (what used to be Romania before World War I) from Transylvania. In the spring we went hiking there, and in the winter skiing. We took the train Friday afternoon and returned Sunday evening. The train ride from Bucharest to the mountains took about two hours. Occasionally we would stop in Sinaia where there is a beautiful spired castle that once belonged to the royal family. Other times we stopped in Predeal. These are two charming villages at the foothills of the Buchegi Mountains.

These mountains, located about 80 miles from Bucharest, are one of the most beautiful mountain ranges in Romania. Omul and Caraimanul, two imposing, over 2000 meter peaks, offer a magnificent and picturesque view of the Prahova valley. With their quaint mountain lodges and sparkling cold streams, these mountains have always been a major tourist attraction. There were numerous marked trails used in winter and summer. Upon climbing the mountains, the trails passed through forests of tall oaks and beeches, then through dark-green pine and fir forests, meandered among juniper shrubs and ended next to majestic rocks near the peak. In the spring, lively colorful mountain flowers embellished the slopes, while in the fall the changing leaves turned the mountains into a symphony of colors. The air was cool and fresh—a welcome change from the dirty, stifling air of Bucharest. Often I left the mountain lodge very early in the morning, climbed to the peak and waited for the sunrise. When low clouds surrounded the peak, the first rays of the rising sun pierced the milky clouds and projected my giant shadow on the dissipating fog behind me. I felt like being in the midst of a fairy tale. In the evening, sitting on a weatherworn bench in front of the cabin, I watched the majestic mountain peaks sparkle in the last rays of the setting sun, and listened to the silence. After dark, I often sat on a log outside the cabin watching the black, star-studded sky or the bright moon darting in and out between the clouds. In the midst of such natural beauty I felt invigorated, my spirits were lifted, and all my worries were temporarily removed. The beauty of nature gave me a liberated feeling.

A major attraction point for tourists was *Pestera* (The Cave). It was a huge cave carved out by nature on the western slope of the mountain. Inside the cave was a small monastery, build centuries ago and served by monks. They had built a small lodge for visitors next to their living quarters. The rooms were austere, having only a simple bed with straw mattress, a table and two chairs. Still, after a long day of hiking, it was a good place to rest.

In the winter we went skiing and sled riding in the Bucegi. I was not a good skier, but I enjoyed the sport. I started out on the beginner's slope, where I took my first lessons and first falls. My ski instructors were colleagues that knew only slightly more about skiing than I did. I had long, heavy wooden skies that were difficult to handle on the slope. I had my share of falls, and by the end of the day I had quite a few bruises. Still, I enjoyed it. Sle riding was also fun. We pulled the sled to the top of a hill not far from the village of Sinaia and sledded down the snow-covered slope. Gradually we picked up speed, glided easily over the white, glistering surface, negotiated turns, dodged trees, outrun hikers and arrive in the valley in no time. It was an exhilarating experience. In the evening we sat together i the lodge around a big fire in the fireplace, warming our hands and feet, commenting abou the day's events, while wet socks, boots, and clothing were drying next to us. The place was warm, noisy and lively. The atmosphere was clammy, and permeated with the odor o perspiration from the drying cloths and socks. Occasionally a whiff of freshly boiled soupe came from the adjacent kitchen through the open door, and made my mouth watery. Som of the mountain lodges, such as the one at peak Omul, had only one large room, with bunks on two levels around the walls and a large iron stove in the middle of the room. At night the air was heavy with the smell of sweat and wet clothing, but it was warm and cozy The memories of those excursions into the Bucegi Mountains are some of the few pleasan memories from my past.

In the spring of 1951 I graduated from the University of Bucharest. To get a diploma, I had to pass a special exam at the end of the four years of study. The exam was taken in front of a commission that consisted of professors who taught the major subjects in the chemistry department. The commission also had a professor for Marxism-Leninism, Leonte Rautu, who was a member of the Central Committee of the party. To prepare for the exam, I had to review many of the subjects taught from the first to the fourth year. I also had to write a research paper with the title "A comparative study of different theories of catalysis." It was a heavy load, but I passed the exam with good

grades (mostly A, one B). I received the degree of "*Diplomat Universitar*" in chemistry that is somewhat between a bachelor and master degree granted by a western university.

The government assigned jobs to most of the graduates, while a small number of them tried to find jobs through their own connections. Many of my colleagues were sent in the provinces as chemistry teachers, while others were assigned to chemistry laboratories in factories, hospitals, and research institutes.

Shortly after graduation, I was called to the Polytechnic Institute of Bucharest to have an interview with Professor Petre Spacu, who chaired the section for inorganic and analytical chemistry at the Institute. He was the son of Gheorghe Spacu, professor of inorganic chemistry at the University of Bucharest. Petre Spacu was a polite, affable gentleman in his forties, whose friendliness and warm voice made me feel at ease. After a brief conversation he asked me if I would be interested in the position of assistant in his section. Naturally, my reply was an enthusiastic "yes." He smiled at me, said that he will recommend me for that position, but that the personnel department will make the final decision. When we parted, he shook my hand and wished me good luck. Several days later I was called to the *Serviciul de Cadre* (the personnel department) of the Institute. Most people dreaded to deal with the *Cadre* as they were called, since they decided the hiring and firing of personnel. They kept a file for each employee of the institution, and that file followed an individual wherever he applied for a job. With a "bad" file that person had no chance of getting a promotion or, if fired, of finding another decent position. The file followed the person everywhere for the rest of his life.

When I arrived at the *Cadre*, I was asked to fill out a 6-page questionnaire. Besides the usual personal questions (name, age, address, degree) there were questions regarding the occupation of my parents, about my own and my family's present or past association with political parties, arrests in the family and assets owned before 1947 (the year of the King's abdication). I had no problem answering the questions about political associations, since nobody in my family had belonged to a political party. What assets are concerned, the Antonescu regime and the Soviets have taken care of those. The only "dark" spot in the questionnaire was my father's profession that put me in the category of those with an "unsound" social origin.

About ten days after my visit to the personnel office I received a reply from the Polytechnic Institute that I had been accepted in the position of assistant for inorganic and analytical chemistry. I was overjoyed. I was offered one of the most

coveted positions for a university graduate: to work in an academic institution. As I found out later, there was a serious shortage of well-qualified graduates. Very few party members who graduated together with me were professionally well qualified. At the same time, the number of students admitted by different institutions of higher learning had increased drastically. Most of the newly admitted students, who represented the future communist intelligentsia, were of working class and poor-peasant origin. They were poorly prepared and needed qualified professional guidance and assistance. The task of providing such guidance was given to the assistants at the institutions of higher learning. Having graduated with very good grades and having an "apolitical" past, the *Cadre* found me acceptable for the position of assistant, in spite of my social origin. My work at the Institute consisted in supervising the laboratory work in analytical chemistry done by freshmen students, and in conducting seminars in inorganic chemistry. The seminars were based on the lectures in inorganic chemistry given by professor Spacu. On this occasion I found out that I have pedagogic talent. I was able to explain often-complex phenomena and theories in a way that made them easily comprehensible to my students. I also fond out that in order to conduct a seminar on a certain topic, I myself have to have a thorough understanding and knowledge of that subject. Otherwise, the students discovered very quickly the gaps in my knowledge, and did not hide their findings from me. But I liked my work, took it serious, and got used to it. Later on, I also gave lectures in analytical chemistry.

Petre Spacu liked the way I worked with the students, and informed his father, Gheorghe Spacu, about my performance. As a result, at the end of the first semester, I got an offer from the university to work part time as an assistant to Professor Gheorghe Spacu at the Department of Chemistry. I accepted the offer, although I already had a full workload at the Polytechnic Institute. My job was made easier due to the fact that the two professors taught similar courses. The laboratory requirements were also similar. Together with other assistants, I held seminars and guided the laboratory work at both institutions of higher learning. On the average I worked 12 hours a day, six days a week.

While my work at the two institutions was similar, the personalities of the two professors couldn't have been more different. While Petre Spacu was friendly with his subordinates, making them always feel at ease in his presence, Gheoghe Spacu was quite the opposite. He had studied in Germany and acquired the manners and customs that prevailed in German universities at the beginning of the century. He was authoritative, very demanding towards his subordinates, and intimidating to his students.

He was distant and unapproachable, but of impeccable integrity. Gheorghe Spacu was a highly respected member of the Academy of Science and known abroad for his scientific work. He was stout, heavy build, with a round full face and sharp, penetrating ice-blue eyes. His soft, white hair was always combed carefully to cover the bald spot on his head. He dressed impeccably, always wearing dark suits, with the corner of a white handkerchief sticking out from his breast pocket. The dark onyx on his tie clip matched those on his cufflinks. For reading he wore a small pince-nez. The exam with Professor Gheorghe Spacu was considered unanimously the most difficult exam in the Department of Chemistry. There were students who tried twice or three times until they succeeded to pass that exam. He was strict, but objective in his judgement. Professor Spacu also ignored the tacit understanding among most faculty members that students with a "sound" social origin – sons and daughters of poor peasants and workers - should never flunk an exam. Every student had to work hard for this exam.

After starting work at the Polytechnic Institute, I had to leave the student dormitory and find a new place to live. At that time my friend Hardy Mayer lived with his parents in a nice section of Bucharest on Jules Michelet Street, near the British embassy. His father, Dr. Mayer, had been arrested and his family was afraid that they might lose their apartment. Therefore, when I started looking for living quarters, they were happy to rent me a room in their apartment. It was a large room, but the Mayer family had to walk through my room to and from the kitchen. When Dr. Mayer was released and returned home, I had to move into a tiny room in the same apartment. I had now more privacy but little room to move. It was a former servant room and I felt in it like a sardine in a tin can. There was room only for a narrow iron bed and a very small table; not even a chair could be squeezed into the small space. To write or read at the table I had to sit on my bed. Since there was no closet, I kept my things in a suitcase under the bed. Whenever I wanted to pick up my shoes or my socks from the floor, I had to open first the door to avoid hitting it with my head or my back. To move in that room required the skill of a contortionist. Nowadays, a convict has more room in his cell in a penitentiary than I had in my tiny room. But at that time, finding living quarters in Bucharest was extremely difficult, and having a room--any kind of room--was considered acceptable. At the same time, by living together, Hardy and I became close friends.

I worked a full year at both the Polytechnic Institute and at the University of Bucharest. At the Institute I had a full time position, while at the University I worked part

time. After the first year, Professor Gheorghe Spacu asked me if I would be willing to give up my position at the Polytechnic Institute and take a full-time position in his section at the University. The number of students at the university had been increased, and he needed an additional assistant to work full-time with the students. He also wanted that the assistant carried out scientific research. I accepted the offer. I gave up my position at the Institute and took a full-time position at the University. Considering how demanding Gheorghe Spacu was, I knew that working for him full time would not be easy. But I wanted to do research work, and that was possible only at the inorganic section of the University. Furthermore, working for Gheorghe Spacu was a highly prestigious position.

Giving up one of my positions didn't gain me any free time. I worked daily with the students, doing seminars in inorganic and analytical chemistry, or supervising their work in the laboratory. After the students left, I went back to my laboratory and did research work until late into the night—except for those evenings when we had political meetings. The days were long, the work was tedious, the pressure constant. The party organization pressured the assistants to work harder with the poorly prepared students of "sound" social origin, while the Professor insisted that we spend more time in the laboratory doing research work. Sometimes the Professor walked into the laboratory in the evening and inquired about my research work. After bringing him up to date with the progress I have made, he suggested a series of additional experiments that I should carry out. These experiments required five or six hours of work. Next morning, at nine o'clock, the Professor was back in the lab and wanted to know what I have accomplished since our last conversation. When I replied that I barely started the experiments, he frowned and walked away, mumbling something about not having done the experiments the night before. Under those conditions, there was not much time left to do anything else but work. Still, I was happy with my academic activities. I liked working with the students, and I liked doing research.

After leaving the Polytechnic Institute I decided to supplement my income by doing translations of scientific books and articles from Russian and German into Romanian. I worked mostly on weekends, and submitted the translated material to "Editura Technica," the Romanian publishing house for scientific literature. I dictated the translated text to a private typist, named Sandra. She was a pretty woman about my age, whose husband had been convicted to hard labor for having belonged to the "exploiting class." He had been sent to the Danube – Black Sea canal to "build socialism." Left on her own, Sandra supported herself by typing for a variety of private clients. Besides being

pretty, Sandra was intelligent, well–read, and had a pleasant personality. During brakes in our work we talked about music, books, theater plays, but never about politics. We both knew that politics was a topic to be strictly avoided. I enjoyed working with her, and as time went by we became good friends.

My work with the students put me sometimes into ticklish situations. One such situation occurred during my first year of full-time assistantship with Professor Gheorghe Spacu. It happened during the year-end written exam in inorganic chemistry taken by the second year students at the Department of Chemistry. It was a difficult exam that required the memorizing of a large amount of descriptive chemistry and numerous chemical equations. About fifty students were sitting in a large classroom on short school benches, two on each bench. Professor Spacu entered the room, dictated the questions and left the room, leaving me in charge of supervising the students for the next two hours.

There was perfect silence in the room. Only occasionally one could hear the rustling of paper sheets shifted or turned. The students were deeply immersed in their work. I walked slowly among the benches for about ten minutes, then I sat down at the lecturing table near the blackboard. I pulled a newly purchased chemistry book from my briefcase and started leafing through it, glancing occasionally at the classroom. About an hour had gone by when I glanced in the direction of Claudia, a twenty-year-old student who was sitting with her legs crossed in the third bench, near the window. Claudia was one of the prettiest young women among the second year students. With her long, dark-brown hair, large hazel-colored eyes, porcelain-white complexion, shapely body and long legs, she attracted the glances of both students and professors. I had been told that Claudia had a very active social life, and that she spent much more time socializing than studying chemistry. She was also very skillful in using to her advantage the physical assets nature had endowed her with. Rumor had it that she had been seen repeatedly in the company of one of our younger professors, who happened to be secretary of the party organization in the Department of Chemistry.

For this exam, Claudia had come elegantly dressed: pale-beige, semi-transparent silk blouse with embroidery, black wraparound skirt, Nylon stockings, and shiny, black shoes with high heels. Claudia was determined to take the exam by whatever means necessary. She had spent time preparing herself for the exam, although not in the same way as other students did. When I glanced at Claudia, I noticed that she had turned over one flap of her wraparound skirt and was looking at paper slips

pasted inside the skirt. I closed my chemistry book, got up, and started walking slowly through the classroom, keeping my eyes fixed on Claudia. The moment I got up Claudia flipped the skirt back into normal position, making the paper slips disappear. She seemed to be aware that I had noticed what was going on, since she looked at me with big, frightened eyes. While I was pacing slowly among the students deeply involved in their work, I was thinking what to do. If I exposed her, not only would she flunk the exam, but she would also be in deep trouble with the party organization. The cheating would be recorded in her personal file, and would remain there even after graduation. On the other hand, it was not fair to the other students who had worked very hard for this exam, to let someone take the exam by cheating. What shall I do? Should I ask her to open her wraparound skirt and expose the paper slips hidden underneath? Or should I turn over myself the end of her skirt and reveal the chemical equations and formulas hidden there? Doing that would obviously get me into deeper trouble than it would get her. I could see myself in a faculty meeting being harshly criticized by a prudish party member for my immoral, "bourgeois-decadent" behavior. Exposing Claudia's cheating would also get me in trouble with the party secretary, who would not look kindly at what I was doing to his close friend. Then I thought of all those inept students that were given passing grades by different professors because of the students' "sound" social origin or because of their political activity. Wasn't that cheating – by the faculty and by the institution that tacitly encouraged them to act this way?

I decided to compromise: I will not have Claudia lift her skirt for me, will not create a fuss and disrupt the exam, but will prevent her from further cheating. For the rest of the exam—nearly an hour—I paced close to Claudia's bench, or stood next to her. She did not fidget anymore with her skirt, but neither did she write much from that point on. At the end of the exam I collected her paper together with the papers of all other students, and turned them over to Professor Spacu. I did not mention the incident to the Professor. Three days later the Professor announced the results. Claudia had passed the exam, barely, with grade 5, corresponding to –C. She had written enough during the first hour of the exam to get a passing grade. Somehow, I was glad that she did not flunk the exam. I would not have liked to see tears in her big, beautiful eyes...

While I was busy with my professional activity, significant changes took place in the country. My personal life also underwent a significant change.

At the end of the 1940s and the beginning of the 1950s, the Romanian Workers Party continued to implement Stalinist principles in the political, economic and cultural life of the country. Having crushed the non-communist parties and keeping with the Stalinist principle of "intensification of the class struggle," the communists continued to use ruthless methods to consolidate their power in the country. Hundreds of thousands of people considered hostile to the "people's democracy" were arrested. A careless, ill-chosen word, a critical remark, a derogatory comment, an inappropriate joke, were sufficient reason to be denounced, arrested and convicted to years of prison or hard labor. Workers and engineers in plants, factories and a variety of nationalized enterprises that were unable to achieve the goals set by unrealistic official economic plans, were arrested and accused of sabotage. Many of those arrested were sent, often without trial, to do forced labor at the Danube—Black Sea canal, one of the "grandiose" projects of the Romanian communist government. When building workers assigned to erect a new factory could not fulfil the official plan by a given deadline, the construction chief, the engineers and the supervisors were accused of being "wreckers," put on trial and sent to the canal. When a machine broke down in a factory because a part needed to replace a worn component could not be obtained, the machine operator and his supervisor were accused of sabotage and arrested. Workers protesting low wages were arrested, accused of being "tools of the class enemies," and sent to labor camps or to the canal. When the collectivization of agriculture began in 1949, the ranks of those arrested were swelled with tens of thousands of peasants that resisted collectivization. They also were sent to the canal. The slave laborers at that project formed a motley mix: legionaries, Zionists, former members of the democratic parties, war criminals, intellectuals, peasants, army officers, workers, students and businessmen. Unable to cope with the hard labor under the burning sun or in freezing weather, frequently beaten and fed a starvation died, tens of thousands of political prisoners died over the years at the canal.

Out of the huge accumulation of blunders, miscalculations, unrealistic plans, phony enthusiasm, and planned slave labor, emerged gradually the socialist society, cemented with the suffering of millions and held in check by the iron grip of the party and its institutions of repression. The major difficulties that continued to plague the economy were blamed on concealed "enemies of the

people" allegedly still active in society, trying to "wreck" the economy and undermine the people's trust in the party.

While the repression went on throughout the country, a struggle developed between different factions within the party. The winning faction branded the losing faction "deviationists," or simply "lackeys of the imperialists." The losers were forced out from their positions of power, put on trial, and sentenced to long jail terms. Some were executed. In this ongoing power struggle there were cases when some of those who called for harsh punishment of the deposed members of the opposition ended up themselves deposed, labeled as "traitors" and punished accordingly. In 1948, Lucretiu Patrascanu, representing national communism, was accused of "national chauvinism" and expelled from the party. He was later put on trial and executed. In 1952, the first-secretary general of the party, Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, accused of "right wing deviations" a group led by Ana Pauker, Teohari Georgescu, and Vasile Luca (the so called Moscow faction). The group was blamed for many failures of the system and was expelled from the party. Vasile Luca was condemned to death, but his sentence was commuted. A campaign of "unmasking deviationists" followed, drawing ever-wider circles of the population into an orgy of denunciations and couter-denuntiations. Among those exposed as "deviationists" or as "enemies of the people" were many key party members that until recently had themselves exposed others as "enemies of the people." Personal and bureaucratic rivalries exacerbated the tensions inside the party. Writers, politicians and a variety of officials were "unmasked" and expelled from the party. Some of those "unmasked" made lengthy public confessions of their "errors," hoping through self-criticism to avoid the dire consequences of those "errors." Even many old "illegal," which had been party members during the previous regimes and had languished in jail during the fascist rule, were swept up in the purge.

The expulsion of Ana Pauker, a Jew, from the party, as well as Stalin's public anti-Semitic remarks during the last years of his life, had a chilling effect not only on the Jewish population in general, but also on the Jewish party members. Some of them, mostly intellectuals, were accused of being "deviationists" or untrustworthy, and were demoted or expelled from the party.

The political repression in the country was accompanied by cultural repression. In the late 1940s and early 1950, the cultural Stalinization of the country reached a fever pitch. A new ideological witch-hunt started among the party intellectuals. Their perceived crime was "cosmopolitanism." Following the example of the Soviet Union, an intensive "anti-cosmopolitan" campaign began in literature, philosophy, fine arts, performing arts, music and science. Whenever real or imaginary western influence was perceived in the work of an artist, writer or composer, he was accused of the crime of "cosmopolitanism." Those accused were usually removed from their posts and expelled from the party. The Romanian Academy was reorganized and stuffed with docile party appointees. The history of the country was rewritten, and given a Marxist interpretation. The role of peasants and workers in the historical development of the country was played up, while that of the aristocracy and royalty was denounced. Close connections throughout the centuries with the Slavic people and culture were emphasized or invented. The writings of many respected cultural personalities of the past and present, such as Nicolai Jorga, Titu Maiorescu, and Lucian Blaga, were characterized as "bourgeois" and their books removed from bookstores and libraries. The writings of other Romanian classics, such as Mihai Eminescu, Vasile Alexandri, and Gheorghe Cosbuc, were published in a censured form. Bookstores were flooded with the works of Max, Lenin, and Stalin, as well as with Romanian translations of numerous Russian and Soviet writers. The works of Romanian writers and poets who towed the party line, such as Mihai Sadovianu, Tudor Arghezi, and Mihai Beniuc, were also widely distributed. The study of the Russian language in high schools and universities became compulsory.

On a sunny day in early March 1953 I went to the university to do my research work in the laboratory. When I arrived, I found an unusual agitation. People were standing in small groups, talking in subdued voices to each other. The telephone kept ringing, but nobody answered it. Some of the female party members had tear rolling down their cheeks. "What happened?" I asked intrigued. "Haven't you heard?" one of my colleagues replied. "Stalin has died." It was stunning news that took everybody by surprise. There had been no repots in the press or on the radio that Stalin had any health problems. People looked

bereaved. An era had come to an end. The atmosphere of grief was mixed with an air of uncertainty. What will happen next? Nobody knew the answer. One thing was sure: whatever happened in the Soviet Union will have a strong impact on our country and our lives.

Soon the buildings were festooned with red flags, having black pennants attached. Stalin's pictures appeared in the store windows draped in black. A hush settled over the city. In many enterprises work was suspended, and shops closed down. At the university all classes were suspended, and a meeting was called at the large university auditorium in the law school. The auditorium was packed with students and professors. In speech after speech Stalin was eulogized as a great leader, great teacher, great military commander, great philosopher, a man who has brought happiness to hundreds of millions of people. Listening to those speeches, one would have concluded that Stalin was the greatest man that ever lived. There was real grief in the auditorium. At the time, nobody knew about the horrible crimes Stalin had committed against his own people during his rule, crimes that were exposed only a few years later by his successors.

During my years of employment by the University I had to work not only with freshmen students, but also with senior ones. At that time I met Susana ("Suzi") Latter. She was a senior student and did work in the laboratory of inorganic and analytical chemistry where I had been assigned as an assistant. Before meeting her as a student I met her socially through Hardy Mayer. I also met socially Rita Horowitz, who became later Hardy's wife. Together with other friends (Adrian, Dodi, Key) we formed a small group that met on weekends, and occasionally took joint hiking or skiing trips. At that time we had many things in common: we had similar cultural interests (classical music, opera, theatre), we loved mountain climbing, and we had a fairly strong Jewish identity. Nobody in our group was a party member. Suzi and I became gradually closer friends, while maintaining at the same time our ties to the rest of the group.

We got married on March 26, 1955. The wedding took place in the apartment of Suzi's parents. They had a large apartment on Roma Street, a nice tree-lined street in a quiet section of town. An Orthodox rabbi celebrated the wedding ceremony under a *chuppa*, according to the Orthodox tradition. In

attendance were about two dozen people. My family was fairly small: my mother, who came from Suceava for the occasion, Uncle Joseph, Aunt Ruchel, and my grandfather. Suzi's family was slightly larger: besides her parents, Andy and Renee Latter, in attendance was Andy's brother Shoni with his wife, Renee's sister Dora, and Suzi's grandfather (Renee's father). There were also several friends of the Latter family, as well as Suzi's and my friends. The brief ceremony was followed by a buffet meal. My grandfather read a beautiful poem he had written in German for the occasion. It expressed deep human feelings about love, devotion and happiness. The poem brought tears to my eyes. It revealed my grandfather's poetic talent, and made me feel proud of him.

Suzi and I were given the room formerly occupied by Suzi in the Latter apartment. The Latters occupied what used to be the master bedroom. In the small room next to the kitchen, that used to be the servant room, lived Suzi's grandfather. Another room in the apartment had been given up to a Romanian family. This was the result of a new law that allowed only a specific number of square meters per person as living space. Any excess living space had to be given up. There was only one kitchen, used by all families in the apartment. A schedule was worked out to take turns in the kitchen. There were two bathrooms. The Latters, Suzi and I shared the same bathroom. Suzi and I had to walk through my inlaws' bedroom to reach the bathroom. Obviously, it was not a comfortable arrangement, but there was no alternative.

The Latter family had been fairly well off before the war. The family members came from Timisoara, formerly a Hungarian part of Romania, and spoke Hungarian, as well as German, at home. Andy Latter had worked in the import-export business, and made a good living. The war, however, and later the communist regime, had destroyed that business. Under the communists, the Latter family had a meager income earned from translations made by Andy from Hungarian and German into Romanian. Andy was a tall, slim man, slightly stooped, with bright brown eyes and a pleasant personality. He was intelligent, well read, and sociable. His wife, Renee, was diminutive, attractive and usually friendly. I was told that in her youth she had been very pretty. Besides Suzi, they had a younger daughter, Gherda. Shortly after my marriage to Suzi, Gherda got married to Titi Kiritsescu, whom she met at the Politechnic Institute

where they both studied. After being married for about one year, they had a son, Victor.

In the first years after graduation, Suzi worked as an assistant in the Department of Chemical Engineering at the Polytechnic Institute of Bucharest. She was assigned to the chair of physical chemistry, where she held seminars or worked in the lab with undergraduate students. A few years later, she was forced out from her job, and replaced by a party member. She found a new job at the Patent Office in the center of Bucharest, where she stayed until we left Romania.

In the summer of 1956, Suzi and I made our first trip to a foreign country. The university organized a trip to Budapest, combined with a short side trip to Lake Balaton, in Hungary. The trip was part of an exchange between the faculties of the universities of Bucharest and Budapest, and included spouses. We were quite excited about the trip. Traveling to a foreign country, even to a communist country, was rare in those days, and a privilege usually reserved to party members. Suzi was especially excited about the trip, due to her Hungarian background. We flew to Budapest with about a dozen people, who were members of different departments at the university of Bucharest, some with spouses. Upon arrival in Budapest, we were received at the airport by a Hungarian delegation, then put on a bus, and quartered in a student dormitory. The following day we started touring the city by bus, with a guide provided by the university. The beauty of that city struck both Suzi and me. Located on the shores of the Danube, the city is divided by the river in two parts: on the western, hilly bank of the Danube is Buda, while on the eastern, flat bank of the river is Pest. Several impressive bridges connect the two parts of the city. In the middle of the river is a small island, called Margarite Island. Having been the seat of kings for many centuries, the city has numerous palaces, impressive buildings and countless monuments. The parliament building, overseeing the city, is the most impressive structure. On top of a hill in Buda is a huge monument dedicated to the Soviet soldiers who liberated the city during World War II. The damage and destruction caused by heavy street fighting during the war was still visible. Many buildings were pockmarked by bullet holes, while other buildings, heavily damaged by the fighting, had not yet been rebuild.

Compared to drab Bucharest, Budapest was a much livelier city. The stores displayed a variety and what appeared to us as an abundance of merchandise that we had not seen in Bucharest. We were also surprised to learn that some of the smaller stores were still privately owned. What impressed us the most was the nightlife in the city, since austere Bucharest had practically no nightlife. On Margarite Island were several nightclubs with colorful lights, lively entertainment, and young people crowding the dance floor. It was the first time that we went to a nightclub. The loud, western music, bright lights, and lively, carefree atmosphere dazzled us. This was one aspect of the liberalization introduced by Premier Imre Nagy in Hungary. Little did we know that Soviet tanks would shortly crush this liberalization.

The sight of the Balaton Lake was less impressive. Located in the middle of the Hungarian *pusta* (plain), the lake served as a substitute sea to the landlocked nation. There were some hotels and cabins near the lake, but neither the facilities nor the lake impressed us. After having been on the shore of the Black Sea, the sight of a muddy lake in the middle of an almost flat plain left us indifferent.

We came home from our trip full of enthusiasm. Budapest had left a strong impression on us, since it was the most beautiful city we had seen so far. The freedom and prosperity that we had noticed in Hungary gave us hope that Romania may follow the same path in the near future.

The events, however, took a different turn. One month after returning from our trip, in the summer of 1956, a revolution broke out in Hungary. We listened with trepidation to the BBC reports on London radio about the bloody events on the streets of Budapest. The Soviet Union sent in its tanks into the city, removed from power the liberal leadership of the Hungarian Communist Party, and replaced it with a more conservative, Soviet-oriented leadership. The Romanian newspaper *Scanteia*, the mouthpiece of the Romanian Workers Party, expressed the Soviet point of view about these events. It labeled as traitors the leadership of the Hungarian Communist Party that had liberalized the regime prior to the revolution, and expressed its support for the Soviet armed intervention in Hungary. At that point we realized that the prospects for liberalization of any Soviet block country had been dashed.

In the fall of the same year we took our first cruise on the Black Sea, on the Romanian ship *Transilvania*. It was a 5,000-ton cruise ship, one of the few Romanian passenger ships traveling on the Black Sea. The cruise started at the Romanian port Constantsa, with stops and visits at the Soviet ports Odessa in the Ukraine, Yalta in the Crimea, and Sochi at the foot of the Caucasian Mountains. While the sailing on the Black Sea was rough and made us often sick, the visits on land were most interesting.

The first stop was in Odessa, the largest Soviet port on the Black Sea. Several large commercial vessels were anchored in the harbor, while smaller boats and barges moved lazily among them. Sailors, soldiers, and civilians mingled on the shore, looking busy and surly. In the city that has seen a lot of destruction during World War II, we walked on acacia-lined Primorsky Boulevard overlooking the port. Some imposing wooden houses, build at the turn-of-the century style, were lining the boulevard. The buildings had been destroyed during the war and rebuild afterwards. Some of the streets had been named after the 18th century French founders of the city (Richelieu, Langeron). We arrived at the Potemkin Steps that became famous through Eisenstein's movie about the mutiny on the battle ship Potemkin during the 1905 revolution. On these steps, the czarist troops massacred a large crowd of terrified civilians. Eisenstein staged and filmed the event in 1925. The sight of the long row of steps descending to the sea brought back memories of scenes from the movie that I had seen years earlier. I remembered the scene in which a civilian was shot through his eyeglasses, of the mother shot dead on top of the stairs, of the baby carriage that was rolling down the steps with the screaming baby. The movie *Potomkin* had some very powerful scenes and had become a classic in the annals of movie history. After visiting the *Potemkin* Steps, we walked to the entrance of the Odessa catacombs, quarried out in the 19th century. The catacombs are a labyrinth of intersecting tunnels, several hundred kilometers long, in which it is easy to get lost. During World War II the catacombs were used as a hiding place by Soviet partisans.

While walking in the port, shabbily dressed Russian civilians approached us and tried to buy the jackets and sweaters we were wearing, as well as the plastic baskets and handbags we were carrying, items that had recently become available in Romania. Some of them literally pulled at the sleeves of the cloths

we were wearing while asking the question *skolko*? (how much?), trying to convince us to sell our jackets and sweaters. We realized that in spite of the shortages experienced in Romania, we still were much better off than the people of the Soviet Union.

The highlight of the cruise was the visit to Yalta, a small resort town located on the southern shore of the Crimea peninsula, on a cypress-strewn strip between the Crimea Mountains and the Black Sea. The scenery of the south coast of the Crimea was of a picture-postcard beauty – a land of vineyards and cypresses, of fruit trees, lilac and bougainvillea. Prior to the revolution, Yalta and its environs had been the summer residence of the tzar and of the aristocracy. Famous Russian writers, such as Lev Tolstoy and Anton Chechov, also spent time in Yalta. After the revolution, many of the aristocratic estates were converted into sanatoria for workers, while *datchas* (summer cottages) were build for the party elite. Several stately mansions could be seen on the surrounding hills. We walked on the waterfront promenade named Naberezhna Lenina, where crowds of tourists spent their time walking leisurely, chatting and window-shopping. The beach was pebbly and narrow, with beach goers lying on wooden boards, trying to catch some sunrays. Palm and cypress trees dotted the landscape. We took also a short trip west of Yalta to a magnificent place called Swallow's Nest. It is a castle perched on the top of a steep cliff, lonely and majestic, overlooking the vast sea.

The most famous place near Yalta is the palace where F. Roosevelt, W. Churchill, and J. Stalin held the conference in February 1945. The palace was build by Tsar Alexander II at Livadia, near Yalta, as his summer residence. After the revolution it was used for rest and recreation by the party and government elite. Located on the bluffs high above a narrow rocky beach, the palace oversees a vast stretch of sea and a large coastal area. We visited the room where the delegations of the three major allies held their conference. It was a large, palatial room, with tall windows overlooking the sea, heavy crystal chandeliers hanging from the decorated ceiling, and tapestries with mythological themes decorating the walls. The shiny, polished parquet floor was partially covered by a huge Persian rug. In the center of the room was a large, wooden round-table with a shiny top. It was surrounded by about a dozen upholstered chairs.

As I looked at the room with its large table and empty chairs, I realized the historic importance of this place. This was the room where the fate of post-war Europe had been decided. It was here that the "spheres of influence" of the major powers had been established, a decision that resulted in Soviet control over most of Central and Eastern Europe for nearly half a century. Standing in that room, I was wondering if the Western delegates at the conference knew at that time what the consequences of their decisions will be for the over one hundred million people affected.

From Yalta we sailed to Sochi. We arrived there on a quiet, sunny afternoon. The town, located not far from the Turkish border, rests at the foot of the Caucasian Mountains near the sea, in the midst of luxuriant vegetation. It is a summer and winter resort. As our ship approached the coastline, the view was one of breathtaking beauty. With binoculars we could see the great variety of vegetation that covered the mountain slope, from the seashore all the way to the mountain peak. At the foot of the mountain there was an abundance of palms, cypresses and magnolia trees, alternating with luxuriant, blooming hibiscus and oleander shrubs. Higher up we saw oak, birch, and maple trees, while above them were fur and pine trees. Closer to the peak, hidden among large boulders, were small, hardy juniper shrubs, and finally, at the top, there was the rugged, snow-covered crest of the majestic mountain. The whole impressive scenery was mirrored, in reverse, in the unusually quiet sea.

The morning after our arrival we boarded a bus, and were given a tour of the city and of its environs. The major street, Kurortny Prospekt, is running in the direction North—South, close to the beach. Several side streets are branching out from the main road, leading into the mountain. The streets are lined with magnolia trees, and bordered by whitewashed, two- and three-story houses. Although it was early autumn, the pebbly, narrow beach was crowded with beach goers lying on wooden boards, trying to catch some sunshine. Several snack bars were nearby, offering *pirozhki* and cold drinks. From the beach one could see ferries arriving or leaving for Sukhumi and Batumi, other resort cities on the Black Sea.

Not far from the beach, on the foothills, were rest homes and sanatoria, among them the *Metalurg* and *Ordzhenikidze* sanatoria. Selected workers from across the Soviet Union were sent to Sochi to spend their vacation there. Many

of them, such as miners and steelworkers, performed heavy-duty work most of the year. Others came from the northern, freezing areas of the country, such as the Arctic Region of northern Russia and Siberia. There were also workers from various plants and factories. The sanatoria were for those who suffered from tuberculosis or other pulmonary diseases. The air was fresh and clean, with a salty smell near the beach, while the temperature was mild in the balmy sunshine. People were milling around on the streets or sitting on park benches among blooming hibiscus and oleander shrubs. They were talking, smoking or reading the newspaper *Pravda*. Most of them had pale or grayish faces, furrowed and often surly, marking a life that had been harsh and difficult. For people who spent most of the year in the depth of a coal mine or in the dark, frozen tundra of the arctic region, being one or two weeks in sunny Sochi must have seemed like being in paradise. It was not, however, enough to wipe away the furrows and sullenness from their faces. A winding road led to *dachas* perched on the mountain slopes, hidden by oleander and hibiscus shrubs, or higher up, among birches and oak trees. Many of the dachas were protected from prying eyes by tall stone walls. The dachas were mostly for the party and government elite. Men in uniform guarded some of the dachas, suggesting the presence of high-ranking *apparatchiks* behind the high walls.

Next day we left Sochi and sailed home. In the morning the sky was clear and a breeze made gentle ripples on the surface of the sea. But soon after we left port, the wind got stronger and whipped foamy crests over the water. Dark clouds appeared from nowhere, and quickly covered the sky. The sea turned dark, its surface lashed by an increasingly furious wind. Tall, powerful waves began to rock our ship, lifting and dropping it like a yo-yo. The tossing and bobbing journey across the sea went on for hours. Then it began to rain. It was one of those rainstorms for which the Black Sea has been known since ancient times, and which gave it its name. Many of the passengers became seasick, and I was no exception. My stomach was moving around as if it was at the center of the storm. I felt a constant urge to vomit, long after my stomach had disgorged all its content. We had no anti-sea sickness medication, nor did the crew of the ship have any. I tried to escape the nauseated feeling by lying down in my cabin, which was close to the engine room. The constant thud of the engines, however, as well as the resulting vibration of the cabin, combined with

the sickening smell of engine oil, made me feel more miserable. In those moments I would have given all my earthly possessions to be again on solid ground.

Towards the evening, the storm subsided, the sea gradually calmed down, and so did my stomach. After another day of sailing on fairly peaceful waters, we finally returned to the port of departure, Constantza. I was glad to be back on solid ground. Still, the enjoyable part of the trip was an experience that I will remember for many years to come.

After the Hungarian revolution of 1956, the Romanian Workers Party, under the leadership of general-secretary Gheorghiu-Dej, started talking about a Romanian road to socialism. It resisted pressure from the Soviet Union and other socialist countries to accept economic specialization within the Socialist Block. Such specialization would have relegated Romania to a raw material supplier and primarily agricultural country, while the more developed socialist countries, such as East Germany and Czechoslovakia, would have emphasized industrial production and development. Following the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Romania in 1958, the Romanian party leadership introduced a certain degree of economic liberalization in the country. That resulted in increased trade with the West, and the growth of imports from capitalist countries. Most imported consumer goods were available in special stores, accessible exclusively to the party elite. Some Western products, however, such as French perfume, Swedish razor blades, Italian leader goods, and American nylon stockings, started to appear also in stores open to the public. In spite of the high price of Western imports, they were bought up quickly by a population starved for quality merchandise. Western machinery was also introduced in some factories and plants. Western technicians who came to install the new machines had a field day. Carrying dollars or German marks, Kent cigarettes and a variety of “gifts,” they were seen often in the company of the prettiest Romanian girls. The new “boy friends” could provide the girls with a bottle of Channel eau de Cologne, a pair of nylon stocking, or a pack of Western cigarettes. The pretty girls, in turn, could offer the western technicians a good time. Both sides benefited from this friendship.

In the fall of 1958, my grandfather died. He was in his mid 80s. The last six years of his life he lived in the same small, crowded room with Uncle Joseph and Aunt Ruchel. He spent most of his time sitting at the small, worn table in the middle of the room, studying a volume of Talmud borrowed from the local synagogue, reading from Goethe's *Werther* in German, or translating poetry from Russian into German. His mind was sharp and clear to the end. He died at home, in his bed.

While I was sitting next to Uncle Joseph on a footstool, looking at the body of my grandfather wrapped in a white shroud, a single candle flickering at his head, memories came back from years gone by. I remembered him on Friday evenings, when he dressed in a black *caftan*, white shirt, and black hat, and walked solemnly to the synagogue, prayer book and *tallit* under his arm. I remembered him sitting with me over a prayer book, instructing me for the Bar Mitzvah and showing me how to put on the *tfillin* on my forehead and on my left arm. I also remembered him reading to me in German poems by Friedrich Schiller and Heinrich Heine. He always pointed out the meaning and beauty of those poems: the beauty of the scenery depicted, the human feelings described by the poet, the moral message of the poems. He told me enchanting Chasidic tales, about angels, miracle-makers, and princes. How I savored those stories! I also remembered the beautiful poem he had composed for my wedding.

From my early childhood on I had the highest respect and admiration for my grandfather. He was knowledgeable in matters of Torah and Talmud, explaining often to others some obscure passage in those writings. Having grown up in Austria and attended Austrian school, he also showed erudition in German literature, an erudition that my mother inherited from him. He was a *Talmud-chochem* (Talmudic expert) and a secular intellectual at the same time – a rare combination for Jews of his generation. Most East-European Jews immersed in religious studies had very little knowledge or interest in secular literature. Similarly, most emancipated, educated Jews, learned in secular literature—German, Russian, or Polish—had little interest or knowledge in religious matters, and treated them often with disdain. In that respect, my grandfather was an exception. It is an irony (or tragedy?) of fate that this kind, wise and enlightened man, who was so knowledgeable and attached to German culture, had three of his daughters and their families murdered by those who

claimed with arrogance to be the standard-bearers of German culture and civilization. Grandfather also had to suffer the loss of his wife eight years before his death. He always treated her with kindness, while she treated him with the love and respect he deserved.

Grandfather was buried at the Jewish cemetery in Bucharest. At the gravesite, Uncle Joseph shed bitter tears of sorrow—he had lost a father he loved and respected.

Shortly after the death of my grandfather, during the Jewish High Holidays, the Romanian government sprang a surprise on the Jewish community. Rabbis and community leaders announced in the synagogues during services that whoever wanted to emigrate may file a petition with the authorities. It seemed that the government had changed again its policy toward Jewish emigration. The announcement had a stunning effect. Nobody expected that the Jews of Romania would be given the opportunity to emigrate. The news created a lot of excitement in the Jewish community. People made all kinds of assumptions, trying to explain the government's decision. Was it an attempt to improve relations with Israel? Was it the result of pressure from Western governments or organizations? Only a few key Jewish party members knew the real reason behind that decision.

In the second half of the 1950s, a new Romanian intelligentsia graduated from the universities and polytechnic schools, an intelligentsia with a working class or poor-peasant origin, educated by the party and eager to take up positions in the government, party, and in the economy of the country. There were, however, only a limited number of positions available. The situation was exacerbated by the acute shortage of housing, mainly in the larger cities. Letting some Jews emigrate was seen by the government as a partial solution to this problem: emigration would open up jobs, would result in many vacated homes and apartments, and would allow the new class of intellectuals to buy from the emigrating Jews goods at bargain-basement prices. It would also deflect, at least temporarily, the discontent that has build up in the population at large due to persistent shortages.

Shortly after the announcement was made a silent, subdued multitude of people lined up in front of the Police Headquarter in Bucharest to apply for

emigration visas. As the days went by, the lines grew longer and longer. Similar lines could be seen in front of police headquarters in provincial cities with a Jewish population.

We had lengthy discussions in our family to decide what to do. Suzi had already lost her job at the Polytechnic Institute, and had been replaced by a Romanian party member. Although I still had a prestigious position at the university, I could see the writing on the wall. Not being a party member, having a "bourgeois" family background, and being Jewish, I knew that sooner or later I will also be replaced by a Romanian party member from the new intelligentsia. Suzi's parents wanted to leave, since their own future in Romania looked bleak. I talked to my mother repeatedly on the phone, and she told me that she would do whatever I decide with regard to emigration.

In the end, we decided to apply for exit visas. On a cold October morning we went to the Police Headquarters. It was five in the morning, but people were already standing in line. The office opened at eight. By that time a long line had formed, and snaked around the building. I stood close to the building wall, trying to hide my face behind a newspaper. If somebody from the university would have walked by and recognized me, I knew that I would promptly lose my position. Around noon we finally entered the visa office, filled out a form requesting emigration to Israel, signed it, and left. Both Suzi and I took a great risk by applying, since our jobs were now in jeopardy. But we had to take the risk if we wanted to emigrate.

Several weeks after the announcement was made during the High Holidays, more than half of the Jewish population of Romania had applied for exit visas. Now it was the turn of the authorities to be surprised. They had not expected that such large masses of people would apply to emigrate. Moreover, many Jewish party members, disappointed with the system and fearing for their future, were among those who had applied. The mass registration was clear proof of the total failure of the government and party policies towards the Jewish population. It was a slap in the face of the party leadership. Moreover, the Soviet government was displeased with this new emigration policy. Arab governments, fearing a massive influx of Jews into Israel, logged energetic protests with the Romanian government.

The party and government had to take action. After handing out several hundred visas, no more visas were issued. Some people had their passports confiscated. Jewish party members who had applied for emigration visas were harshly criticized at party meetings, accused of lack of loyalty to the regime, and expelled from the party. They also lost the key positions they occupied in the institutions and enterprises where they worked. Jews who were not party members and occupied important economic or administrative positions, were fired or demoted if they applied for exit visas. Even Jews who had not applied for exit visas and occupied key positions were gradually replaced. At the same time, a campaign began against Israel, which was accused of carrying out subversive activities in the country and misleading the Jewish population of Romania. Some Romanian Jews were arrested as Israeli "agents," and several Israeli diplomats were expelled.

In the past, when the Jews did not have a country of their own, Romanian nationalists and anti-Semites used to scream at them: "Go to Palestine!" Now, when Jews finally had their own country and wanted to go there, the Romanians were telling them: "We are not going to let you go. You will stay here, with us!" How times have changed...

Neither Suzi nor I lost our jobs. We assumed that our positions were not important enough to make it necessary for the government to inform the personnel departments of our institutions. Or was it a bureaucratic oversight? In any case, the personnel department of the university was not aware that I have requested an exit visa. They caught up with me later, however, in a way I would have never expected.

On January 4, 1959, Gabi was born in the Central Hospital in Bucharest. I felt great joy to have a little boy, and was proud to have become a father. After bringing Gabi home, we rearranged the furniture in our room, and set up the crib not far from the stove. We wanted to make sure that the child would stay warm in the harsh winter months. We also had to rearrange our lives. During the first few months, neither Suzi nor I got enough sleep. For that matter, neither did my in-laws. Every night they could hear the baby crying, since the thin wall that separated us did not make the rooms sound proof. Before Suzi returned to work,

we hired a young Hungarian girl, Anush, to take care of Gabi in our absence. Anush was about fourteen years old, came from the Hungarian region of Transylvania, and spoke only a smattering of Romanian. It was mostly Suzi and my in-laws who communicated with her, in Hungarian. Since my knowledge of Hungarian was practically nil, I communicated with her by using a selected few words she understood, or by using sign language. Gabi, however, who at that time did not speak either Romanian nor Hungarian, was able to express his wishes quite clearly to all of us, mostly by crying or by pointing with his little finger at things he wanted.

Time went by and Gabi turned from a baby into a little boy. He was lively, cute, playful and loved by everybody in the family. At the age of three or four he was a chubby little boy with pink cheeks, curly soft hair, and lively, brown eyes, always ready to run and play. He also loved to sit in the bathtub and splash around the soapy water, or let his rubber duck float on the water.

For the adults, who lived and worked under constant pressure and uncertainty about the future, there were only few occasions for relaxation and enjoyment. For me, one of those few occasions was to come home after a long day at work and see Gabi running towards me with open arms and embrace me. After spending the whole day with Anush, he was happy to see me. We played together, laughed together, rolled on the floor together. He liked to play "horsy" with me. In that case I had to get down on my hands and knees while he climbed on my back and drove me around the room, calling out *ghio, ghio* as if enticing a horse. On Sundays we went to visit Uncle Joseph or took a walk in the park. In the summer, we went often to Lake Harastrau where I rented a rowboat. We climbed into the boat and I started paddling over the smooth, glittering surface of the lake, with Gabi facing me and holding on firmly to his seat. He watched with fascination the boat gliding over the blue-gray water, the waves generated by the oars plunging into the water, and the occasional fish swimming briefly near the boat and then disappearing in the depth of the lake. These were enjoyable times for both of us. We came home refreshed, in good spirits and hungry.

There was one experience that Gabi had in his early childhood that left its mark on him for the rest of his life. In the summer of 1962, when Gabi was about three-and-a-half years old, my mother-in-law Renee sent Anush to the

market to buy a chicken. In those days it was common to go to the open-air market and buy a live chicken from a peasant. The chicken was taken home and kept in a cage or in the courtyard until its owner decided to make a meal of it. Anush brought home a chicken and put it in the small courtyard behind the house. The feathery animal fascinated Gabi, who saw for the first time a live chicken. He watched the bird, fed it with corn kernels, and sometimes chased it. After about a week the day came when Anush took the chicken to the ritual slaughterer ("shochet"), brought home the dead chicken, cleaned it, cooked it, and served it to the family for dinner. Gabi, who had not seen the chicken the whole day, wanted to know where the chicken was. Unaware of the sensitivity of a small child, Anush pointed with her finger to Gabi's plate and said with a smile: "Here is your chicken." Gabi started to cry bitterly, and it took a long time to quiet him down. Since that evening, Gabi refused to eat meat. He became a vegetarian, and remained one even as an adult. It shows how a relatively insignificant event in early childhood can leave its mark on a person's adult life.

So far, I have not described my marriage to Suzi. Even now, remembering the events that occurred in our life in the late 1950s and early 1960s brings back pain and sorrow. In hindsight, I realize that non-of us knew how to handle our marriage. We both made mistakes. Almost from the beginning we had problems in our relationship, which led to tensions and discord. Moreover, the pressures experienced on the job, the oppressive political environment we lived in, the countless hours spent standing in line to purchase items such as sugar or toilet paper, the crowded quarters we had to share with Suzi's family and later with our child, the total lack of privacy--all those circumstances exacerbated the tensions between us. As time went by, our marriage deteriorated.

I started thinking about a divorce, but rejected the idea for two reasons. First and foremost, I did not want to break up our family for Gabi's sake; it would have been a traumatic experience for such a young child to be removed from one of his parents. Another reason was the absence of available housing. The housing shortage in Bucharest was extremely severe. To obtain an apartment or even a room in an apartment required in those days special connections, which I

did not have. As a result, Suzi and I continued to stay under the same roof. Besides Gabi, we had little else in common.

In the mid 1950s the University of Bucharest introduced a Ph D program. At the Chemistry Department, the program required completion of a scientific research project in a specialized area of chemistry: inorganic, organic, physical, or industrial chemistry. Once completed, the project was to be presented in front of a commission, consisting of the senior professors of the department. Additionally, the candidate had to pass exams in Marxism—Leninism, in Materialism dialectic and historic, as well as an exam in a foreign language to be chosen from French, German, English, and Russian.

I decided to start working towards a Ph D degree in inorganic chemistry, an area in which I had worked for many years. I chose my subject in the field of "complex compounds:" the synthesis and characterization of a series of "complexes" containing chromium and a variety of amino acids. My scientific advisor was Professor Petre Spacu. He had taken over the chair for inorganic and analytical chemistry at the university in 1955, after his father Gheorghe Spacu, who headed the chair until then, died. The personalities of father and son could not have been more different. While Gheorghe Spacu was very energetic and extremely demanding from his assistants and his students, Petre Spacu was placid, not sure of himself, and quite lenient towards his assistants and his students. A psychologist would have said that a domineering father had crushed his personality. He let me do my work without interference or pressure; only at the periodic review meetings of our group did I report the progress made.

In 1958 I completed the scientific project and wrote my dissertation. The exams in ideological subjects and in foreign language--I chose German--went without a hitch. The presentation of my dissertation, however, gave rise to a somewhat heated debate between two members of the examining commission. They differed in the interpretation of some of the data I presented. Such discussions and differences of opinion were common at scientific meetings, but not at the presentation of a dissertation. Except for one, all other professors on the commission agreed with my interpretation of the experimental data. Somewhat embarrassed by the behavior of one of their colleagues, they approved my thesis without delay.

Only later did I find out that there was more to it than a simple difference of scientific opinions. The one member of the commission who disagreed with my interpretation of the scientific data did raise his objections at the instigation of some of my younger colleagues. They were members of the new intelligentsia, party members with a "sound" social origin, unable to get a Ph D degree, but eager to get a fast promotion. They could not accept that a Jew-- and a non-party member to boot-- would received an advanced degree and become a potential competitor for them in the future. They also intended to tarnish the image of my scientific adviser, Professor Spacu, in order to facilitate his replacement by a party member. The professor they approached for that purpose was a leftover from the old, fascist regime, anxious to keep his position. He also had a history of anti-Semitic remarks, and was more than happy to comply with the request of my younger colleagues. Fortunately, the objectivity and integrity of the other members of the commission prevailed. Several months later I published my thesis as a series of articles in the *Zeitschrift fuer anorganische und allgemeine Chemie*, a scientific journal in East Germany. After publication, I received requests for reprints of my articles from all over the world. The incident at the presentation of my thesis, however, taught me a lesson: there was no future for me in the university system.

In the early 1960s, following its zigzag policy towards Israel and "the Jewish problem" in Romania, the government's policies took a new turn. Eager to show its independence from Moscow and to polish its image in the West, the Romanian government improved its relations with Israel. That improvement took different forms: the government sent to Israel about 2,000 Torah scrolls that came from the numerous synagogues shut down first by the fascists and later by the communists; Jewish emigration resumed, although at a very slow pace; mostly for elderly and people without useful skills. At the same time, the government continued to arrest and persecute those it accused of spreading Zionist propaganda or being Israeli "agents." In order to gain hard currency, the government set up, in secret, a barter system for Jews wanting to emigrate. Through various intermediaries placed in different Western capitals, people living in the West or in Israel would pay a certain amount of dollars or other hard currency into an escrow account. In return, the government would issue

discretely exit visas to their relatives in Romania, and collect the money. The prices varied by profession and degree of relationship. For a university graduate, the price was about $5,000 a head. For a doctor the price could be as high as $20,000. The state was selling its Jews!

When we heard about the new "trading" practiced by the Romanian government, we decided to explore the new route. We had relatives in Israel that could possibly help us. Andy had a brother and I had my sister and brother-in-law there. We did not know their financial situation, but we were hopeful that they could help us. We wrote to them and asked that they contact one of the foreign intermediaries. We wrote in a roundabout way, to avoid problems with the Romanian censors, who routinely opened letters sent to foreign countries. After awhile our relatives replied that they would explore the possibilities we suggested. And then—silence. Months went by and our relatives did not mention anymore that subject in their letters. We were puzzled. Were they unable to help us? Have they written to us on this subject and the censors have confiscated the letters? We were in the dark, and our hopes dimmed.

Early in 1962, Andy, Renee and Dora received a brief official notice, requesting that they appear at Police Headquarters the following Monday at a specified office. No reason was given for the request. The letter caused anguishes and worries in our family. To deal with the Romanian authorities had always been an intimidating experience. Being called to Police Headquarters with no reason given was quite upsetting. Will it result in arrest? One never knew the outcome of such an invitation. After all, Andy had been a businessman before the war; therefore he was a member of the exploiting class. Some of his former business friends had been arrested and sent to the Danube—Black Sea canal to do hard labor. Dora's husband had also been a businessman. Moreover, the Latters and Dora were considered "unproductive elements" by the regime, since non-of them worked for a state enterprise. Were they called to be evicted from their apartment to make room for a party bureaucrat brought in from the provinces? We knew of several such situations, and we were worried.

On Monday, Andy, Renee and Dora went to Police Headquarters with trepidation and anxiety. Before leaving, they told Suzi and me what to do and whom to contact in case they don't return. At Police Headquarters they had to wait over an hour in a dimly lit hallway before being admitted into the office.

After showing their identification papers, a sullen police officer informed them that they had been granted exit visas to Israel. They had to leave the country within a week.

The Latters and Dora came home quite agitated. The news was unexpected and left them with mixed feelings. They did not quite understand why exit visas had been granted to them. Had they been "bought out" by their relatives in Israel, or had the government granted them exit visas because they were "socially unproductive" elements? As they found out later, they had been "bought out." In any case, having been given permission to leave the country, they felt that their wish had become reality. But the Latter's excitement was tempered by the awareness that they had to leave their children and grandchildren behind. Gherda and her family had no intention of emigrating, while Suzi and I had no idea if or when we will receive exit visas. The thought of having to start a new life in a country with a different culture, a different social system, and a different language, made the Latters apprehensive. The fact that they were already in their fifties, an age at which making a new start in life is not easy anymore, was not comforting either. In the end, optimism prevailed. Andy felt he had enough energy to start a new life, and that his relatives in Israel will be helpful. Renee felt the same way, but was worried about those of us left behind. Dora was most eager to leave, since she had no family to leave behind, and was looking forward to be with her relatives in Israel.

After selling a few of their belongings and dividing the rest between Gherda and us, the Latters and Dora left by plane for Vienna. It was an emotional separation, marked by an uncertain future. None of us knew if or when we will see each other again. After the airplane left, we returned home in a somber mood, each with our own thoughts. I realized how limited our choices were regarding our lives and our future. I felt that our lives are like nutshells tossed around by the waves of a stormy sea, totally at the mercy of pitiless political forces. We were at the mercy of a government that decided if we may or may not leave the country, if we may or may not keep our jobs, if we may or may not keep our apartment. The same government decided if we can benefit from the very limited freedom it granted its subjects, or if we are branded "enemies of the people" and arrested. As I was to find out soon, the government had in store a nasty surprise for me.

On a sunny morning in early 1962 I stepped out of the house and crossed the street to walk to the bus stop. I had no students that morning and intended to take the bus to the university to continue my research work in the laboratory. Suzi was out of town on one of her business trips, and Anush stayed home with Gabi. As I crossed the street, two men approached me. Each of them grabbed one of my arms, and continued to cross the street with me. I looked at them with surprise, while they smiled at me and said, "Lets walk together." For a moment I thought they were two of my former colleagues, whom I did not recognize anymore. Indeed, any passer-by would have thought that we are friends, judging by the smiles of the two individuals. When we reached the sidewalk, before I realized what was going on, a speeding unmarked car stopped suddenly next to us, its brakes screeching. The doors sprang open, and my two companions pushed me into the backseat. Then they jumped into the car, one to my left and the other to my right. They slammed the doors and the car took off. All this happened in less than one minute, and none of the people waiting for the bus noticed anything unusual.

While the car sped away, one of the men said to me in a firm voice: "Bend forward, head close to your knees, and don't move." I finally realized that I had been picked up by the *Securitate* (secret police). It was obvious that they did not want me to see where they were taking me.

My heart started pounding; I could feel the blood pulsing in my ears. My position in the car was far from comfortable. Quickly I became aware, however, that I must keep my cool. I had to control my emotions and think fast. While I was staring at the spotted car floor between my knees, arms crossed under my chest, thoughts started to race through my mind. It was clear that I had been arrested. Why? Maybe it was a mistake. Maybe they wanted to arrest someone else and picked me up instead. In that case I will clear it up as soon as I can talk to someone in charge. If it was no mistake, however, what do they have against me? I raked my brain, but could not come up with an answer.

I tried to figure out in what direction we were going. At the beginning I could hear the traffic noise from passing cars and the screeching wheels of tramcars. I knew we were in the center of the city. But then the traffic noise subsided, and only occasionally did I hear a passing car. We were now driving

in a much quieter part of town, possibly in a suburb. The air also felt cleaner and fresh. Then the car slowed down, made a turn, and came to a stop. The driver talked briefly to somebody in a subdued voice, and then I could hear the screeching sound made by the opening of a heavy gate. The car moved slowly and came again to a halt. I heard the gate closing behind us with a thud. We had arrived at the destination. Only then was I allowed to raise my head.

I got out of the car into a paved courtyard. Still flanked by the guards, I entered a long, dimly lit hallway, with white-painted doors on both sides of the walls. We entered one of the rooms. The white walls of the room were bare, and a single bulb lamp was hanging from the ceiling. The windowpanes were painted white, to prevent people like me from looking outside, as well as outsiders from looking inside. In the middle of the room was a heavy wooden desk, with a chair next to it. Along the wall opposite the window was a wooden bench. One of the guards, who appeared to be senior in rank among the two, ordered with a brusque voice: "Empty your pockets and put their content on the desk." Out came my wallet, handkerchief, a few coins, keys and address book. The junior guard checked my pockets, to make sure that I did not try to hide anything. The senior guard looked into my wallet, but apparently did not find anything of interest. Then he went through my address book. That attracted his attention, since he sat down and started to read carefully page after page. When he finished reading, he put it in his pocket. From his blank face I could not tell if he had found what he was looking for. The rest of my belongings he returned to me. "Sit down on the bench and wait until we call you," said the senior guard to me. "But why am I here?" I wanted to know. "You'll find out," was his snappy reply. He then left the room, closing the door behind him.

I sat down on the bench and started thinking. Why did they arrest me? What did I say or do that could be perceived as anti-socialist or subversive activity? I tried to remember the people I talked to over the last few weeks, but nothing suspicious came to my mind. Have I been falsely accused by one of my colleagues or by a disgruntled student? Many scores have been settled over the years by false accusations. Or was it a neighbor who wanted our apartment? I knew that they would interrogate me. I will have to be very careful with my answers, not to incriminate my family, my friends, or myself. Hours went by. I became more and more nervous. How long are they going to keep me here?

Why do they let me wait for so long? Is this their method to let me boil in my own juices, to soften me up before interrogation? I kept repeating to myself: be calm and stay alert. This is what I must do under these circumstances.

After hours of waiting, the door finally opened. The senior guard stood in the doorway. With a brief "come" he asked me to follow him. I got up and walked quickly out the door. We walked down the hallway until the guard stopped in front of a white-painted door. He knocked at the door and when the reply came "come in," he opened the door and let me walk in first. We were in a room similar to the first one. The walls and windowpanes were also painted white. However, here I faced a man in civilian clothes, sitting behind a desk with a folder in front of him. The guard put my address book on the desk and left the room without saying a word. The man I was facing was short, stocky, and middle-aged, with carefully combed raven-black hair and sharp, penetrating, black eyes. He wore a dark-gray suit, white shirt and red tie. In a crisp, cold voice he said, "Sit down, Mr. Scherzer." It did not surprise me that he did not address me "comrade Scherzer." I knew that those arrested were always addressed "Mr." and not "comrade." They were no longer worthy of being members of the community of "comrades." I sat down in a chair facing him. It was one of those hard, wooden chairs with a straight back, not very comfortable to sit on. The man took out a blank form from the folder and put it in front of him. Then he started to interrogate me. Last name? First name? Year of birth? Place of birth? Present address? Place of work? While I was answering the questions, my interrogator made notes on the blank form. These questions were a simple formality, since I was sure that he already had that information. Then he asked me if I had applied for an exit visa to Israel. "Yes," I replied. He recorded my answer. He then opened the folder, took out a picture, and showed it to me. It was a group-picture of eight or ten people, Suzi and I among them. The others were Hardy and Rita Mayer, our friends Adrian and Suzi Birbanescu, Key with his girlfriend, Dodi and a male-friend of his. I recognized the picture immediately. It had been taken New Year's eve at a mountain cabin in the Bucegi, where we had spent a few days of winter vacation. At the cabin we met Dodi and his friend, whom I did not know, and took jointly a picture.

The interrogator asked me where and when the picture was taken, and the identity of the people in the photograph. I told him where the picture was

taken and the identity of those I knew, but could not remember the name of Dodi's friend. He then asked me to give detailed information about each person in the picture: since when I knew them, their occupation, how often and where we met, what we discussed during those meetings, and if I know which one has applied for an exit visa. I tried to answer carefully to all the questions, aware that a careless answer could mean serious trouble for my friends. Then the interrogator asked if any of the people in the picture had encouraged me to apply for an exit visa. "No," was my prompt reply. At that point I began to realize what he was after. Someone in this group was suspected of Zionist propaganda, and he was looking for potential witnesses. He took my address book, browsed through it, and questioned me about some of the people listed there. After I told him that they were friends, relatives, or colleagues, he did not show any interest in them. Apparently, he had not found any of the names or addresses he was looking for. Only later did I find out that several days before my arrest, Dodi and his friend had also been arrested. They were accused of being Zionist "agents," of spreading Zionist propaganda, and of enticing people to emigrate to Israel. During the search of Dodi's apartment, the police found the picture taken on New Year's eve. Dodi had to identify each person in the picture.

The interrogator returned to the subject of my exit visa. Have I notified the university, my work place, of the application? "No," I replied. Did I know what would happen if the university found out about my application? "I would lose my job," I answered. He nodded, then closed the folder and leaned back in his chair. He took out from his pocket a pack of cigarettes and offered me one. When I declined, he lit one for himself. After a few puffs on his cigarette, he suggested a deal. He would let me go and not inform the university that I had applied for an exit visa. In return, he wanted me to agree to meet periodically with one of his people and have a conversation with him. To tell him what is being discussed among my colleagues and friends; what opinions they expressed with regard to the party and government policies; if any political jokes or derogatory remarks were being made; if they listened to and discussed radio broadcasts from the West. Simply put, he wanted me to inform on my friends and colleagues. He also told me that money would not be a problem. Whatever expenses I incurred during these activities, I would be fully reimbursed. He gave me an example: if I invited some people to a good restaurant and ordered food

and drinks for everybody—especially lots of drinks to loosen their tongues—I should not worry about the cost. His man will take care of the bill.

I now realized that this was another objective of my arrest: to blackmail me into becoming an informer. I knew that people had been forced to become informers by threatening them with arrest or loss of their jobs. Other people have become informers for the money, while some did it out of conviction or opportunism. But it has never occurred to me that I could be blackmailed into becoming an informer. In addition to the loss of my job, there was another threat that my interrogator did not mention or was not aware of: the loss of my doctoral degree. I did not have yet the doctoral diploma, and I knew that the Ministry of Education would issue it in the next several weeks. If the Ministry found out about my visa application, I could have said "good bye" to my diploma.

I had to reply to the proposal made by my interrogator. Do I accept or reject he deal he was offering me? I felt instant revulsion against snitching on my friends and coworkers, of betraying their friendship and trust. I knew that I would not ruin their lives and careers in order to save my job. If I did such a despicable deed, I would be disgusted with myself for the rest of m life. I also knew that sooner or later the university will find out about the visa application and that I will lose my job. But I wanted to save at least my diploma. I have earned my doctoral degree through many years of hard work, and I was not going to let it slip away. Whatever the future had in store for me, I knew that I will be better off with a doctorate than without one. I had to find a way to convince my interrogator not to inform the university at least in the next few weeks, until I got my diploma.

I told the interrogator that I accept his proposal. He seemed to be pleased to have achieved his objective, to turn me into an informer. Someone with the name of Peter will contact me by phone, he said, and arrange a meeting soon. He also told me not to talk to anybody about the events of the day. He then returned my address book, and rang a bell. One of my guards appeared and led me out into the hallway. He led me to the car, which than took off. It was already dark and I could not make out where we were driving. When the car stopped, the guard told me that I am free to go. I was in the center of the city, near the university. I stood on the sidewalk for a few minutes, inhaling the fresh evening air. I was free again. Or was I? Suddenly I felt very hungry. Since

morning I have not had anything to eat. I walked quickly to the bus stop and went straight home. I didn't tell anybody what happened, what kind of day I had. That night I tossed and turned in bed, unable to sleep.

In the days that followed I avoided seeing any of my friends. I tried to avoid a situation in which I would have to listen to some derogatory remark about our political system, the latest jokes about some party leader, or comments on the latest news broadcast by BBC radio. In the past we discussed freely these topics among us, since we knew each other for many years and trusted each other. But now I was scared. What if someone else in our group has been forced to become an informer? What if somebody in our group tells a joke about one of our leaders, and I don't report it? Will someone else report it? I had heard that the *Securitate* often uses one informer to check on another one. I suddenly realized that I couldn't trust anymore even my closest friends. How terrible it is to live in a system in which you cannot trust even your best friends!

Two weeks later I got a call from "Peter." He called me in the evening, at home, and asked me to meet him. He gave me an address, as well as the date and time of our meeting. We met in a private apartment, not far from the university. Peter was waiting for me. He was a short, skinny individual with Gypsy features. His face was pockmarked, his eyes dark, and his complexion swarthy. His black hair was shining from an overdose of brilliantine. He wore an ill-fitting, dark-gray suit, white shirt, and blue tie. After exchanging greetings, he got directly to the point. He wanted to know what I have to report about my friends and coworkers, any political remarks they made, any political discussions we had. I replied that I had not seen any of my friends lately, that I was very busy with my work and family, and that I did not have time for conversations with my coworkers. He then instructed me to find time to meet my friends, to lead my conversation with them to political topics. He wanted me to find out their opinions about the latest party and government decisions, about the situation in the country and in the world. I should also try to listen to the conversations of my colleagues at my work place. At the end, he requested that we meet again in two weeks. To improve my chances of getting my doctoral diploma, I tried to gain time. I suggested that we meet in three weeks, since this would provide me with more opportunities to speak to my friends and colleagues. Peter agreed.

After that meeting, my decision was final. I will not stoop to the level of a snitch; I will not denounce and betray my friends and coworkers, regardless of the price I will have to pay. The next morning I went to the university's office for advanced degrees to inquire about my diploma. I was told that several diplomas have arrived, and that they will be distributed in the following days. Indeed, a week later I was called by the university administration, and a secretary handed me my doctoral diploma. There was no ceremony, no speech by the rector. I received the document with a deep sigh of relief. After years of hard work, obstacles and uncertainties, finally I had the coveted diploma in my hand.

For my next meeting with Peter I came prepared. I told him again that I have been much too busy to meet with my friends, that I have had no opportunity to listen to or to engage in conversations with my colleagues, and that I have nothing to report. I made it clear to him that I was unable and unwilling to inform on my friends and colleagues. Peter frowned, but said nothing. He understood. We parted without shaking hands.

It is in times of crisis and despair that the traditional values, which my parents instilled in me during my childhood and adolescents, were put to the test. I had to choose between decency, dignity and fairness on one hand, and selfishness, immorality and betrayal on the other. I chose the former, well aware that I will have to pay a high price for that choice. In retrospect, in spite of the hardships that followed, I am proud that I had the moral strength to pass this test with flying colors.

Three days after my meeting with Peter, I received a phone call. On the line was the rector's secretary. She informed me that the rector wanted to see me the following morning. I was not surprised. After my last encounter with Peter I expected that phone call. Next morning I presented myself at the rector's office. Although I had seen him at meetings, I have never met him in person. I knew that he was an old party member, a communist intellectual, who had spent years in jail under the old regime. Our conversation was brief. He told me that he had been informed that I have applied for an exit visa, that I want to leave the country. "Is it true?" he asked. "Yes," I said, "it is true." In that case, he replied, I couldn't keep any longer my position at the university. As of that moment, I was fired. He also told me not to return to my office anymore. I was not allowed even

to pick up my teacup from the office. I left without saying a word. Thus came to an end my career at the University of Bucharest. It was spring of 1962.

Almost overnight, my life took a sharp turn for the worse.

The loss of my position at the university came as a shock to me. Although it did not come unexpected, it was a financial and psychological blow. Over the years I had grown accustomed to work with students, to do scientific research work in the lab, to prepare lectures and seminars. Suddenly I was cut off from that world and left with no income. It took some time for that reality to sink in.

I tried to find another position. Wherever I applied, I had to state my last place of work and the reason for leaving. As soon as the personnel department saw the reason for losing my position at the university, I was rejected. I knew that my file at the university would follow me, that I could not hide anymore my visa application. Weeks went by without success. Eventually I realized that my only chance to get a job was to accept the position of an unskilled worker, of a laborer. I finally got a position in a chemical factory, located in a remote suburb of Bucharest. The factory manufactured paints and varnishes, and had a small analytical laboratory for the analysis of these products. I was hired in the position of "laborant," a kind of assistant to a laboratory chemist. A "laborant" usually cleans reaction vessels and test tubes, wipes the lab benches clean, and occasionally mops the floor. My salary was close to that of a laborer. It was quite a change from my previous position of university assistant.

There were four chemists in the laboratory, doing chemical analyses for the factory. The head of the laboratory was Maria. She was a middle-aged, dark-haired woman-chemist, with wide, deep-brown eyes, pale skin and attractive features. She was a party member, but not a firebrand communist. Like many others, she had joined the party to be able to get a better position in the factory and a faster promotion. She treated her subordinates, including myself, in a gentle, friendly manner. She knew what my previous position had been, knew why I lost that position, and showed a certain understanding for my predicament.

After working for a month in my new position, cleaning glassware and mopping the floor, Maria approached me and asked me if I would like to help the chemists with laboratory work. A large number of analyses had to be completed within the next few days, and she did not have enough manpower to do the job. I accepted the offer immediately. I was glad to work again as a chemist, instead of doing the work of a housemaid. The work was very simple compared to the

research work I had done in the past. I felt a certain joy putting on a lab coat and working again with chemicals, beakers, distillation equipment, and a variety of instruments. It was the kind of work I had been accustomed to. I carried out almost with no effort the assignment that Maria gave me. After I completed the analyses in record time, Maria decided to talk to the factory party secretary on my behalf. It is a total waste of my experience and knowledge, she told him, to use me as a laborant. I would be much more useful to the factory if I would work as a chemist in the laboratory. The secretary of the party organization agreed. Even he realized how absurd it was to let me work as a laborant. He instructed Maria to assign me the work of a chemist. In the personnel department, of course, I would continue to be listed as laborant and continue to be paid accordingly. I was quite pleased when Maria brought me the news. At least I could work in my profession, even if the pay was that of a laborer.

The winter of 1962/1963 proved to be difficult for me. It was a harsh winter, accompanied by storms and heavy snow. The city's streets were cleaned only sporadically, and transportation became chaotic. There were food shortages and gas for heating was provided only several hours daily. To get to work, I had to take first a bus, then the tram car to the last stop, and then walk about a mile over an open field to reach the factory. The bus and tramcar were without heat and were packed with people wrapped in heavy winter coats. Most of the time an icy wind blew over the open field I had to cross on foot. After a heavy snowfall, the streets became impassable. Either the buses or the tramcars stopped running. In that case I had to walk several miles, often through deep snow, to reach my place of work. During the winter months I left home around 5 a.m. every morning. It took me two to three hours to reach the factory. When I finally arrived at the laboratory, I was shivering and exhausted. A cup of hot tea and a ten-minute rest restored some of my energy. Only then could I start my daily work.

Suzi had kept her professional position at the Patent Office, while I had now the position and income of a laborer. The loss of my academic position, the temporary unemployment, and my hiring in the position of a laborant proved to be the last straw that brought our marriage to the breaking point. We divorced in March 1963. As expected, Suzi was granted custody of Gabi. For me, the

divorce proved to be very painful and upsetting. After the blow I had suffered in my professional life, I had to cope now with a serious blow to my personal life. I felt that fate had turned against me. What angered me most was the harm the divorce was doing to Gabi. He was four years old and innocent, but would have to suffer the consequences of the break up of our marriage.

Three weeks after the divorce, the police notified us that we had been granted exit visas. Since our papers had been processed prior to our divorce, the visas were granted to the three of us as a family. At the same time, my mother was also granted an exit visa in Suceava. We knew that the families in Israel—my sister and Suzi's parents—were working intensively to get us out of Romania. Only later did we find out that they had deposited a large amount of money through an intermediary in an escrow account in London on our behalf. My mother was included in the deal. Once we left Romania, the money was supposed to be transferred to a bank account controlled by the Romanian government.

There was, however, a problem with the entrance visa. To obtain the exit visa from the government, we needed to have an entrance visa from another country. To avoid frictions with Arab countries, Romania refused to grant exit visas to Israel. Another country had to be found. After a frantic search, the intermediary that made the financial deal eventually made the visa arrangements. We were granted entrance visas by the British embassy in Bucharest, with the understanding that the British visas will be valid only to leave Romania. Once we arrived in Vienna, our first destination, we had to make further arrangements to travel to Israel or another country, but not to Great Britain. The British did not want us.

When I went to Maria, my supervisor at the factory, and told her that I am resigning from my job and leaving the country, her first reaction was surprise. She did not expect to see me leave that soon. Then she grabbed my hand and congratulated me. Her face expressed joy, but also envy. The envy that I am able to leave behind a drab, difficult life and start a new life in a better world. I saw a similar reaction in the faces of my other colleagues, when I said good-by to them. In spite of the intense communist propaganda that described Western

countries as lands of oppression and exploitation, most people perceived life in the West as being much easier and happier than their own life.

We had to dispose of most of our belongings. We were allowed to take with us only a wooden trunk filled with clothing and kitchen utensils, weighing no more than 60 kg. Nothing of value could be taken. Paintings, silverware, jewelry, artwork had to be left behind. Even photographs, including family pictures, were not allowed. Nothing made of paper, such as notebooks, diaries, address books, or newspapers could be taken out of the country. Only the emigration documents were allowed. Documents, such as birth certificates and school diplomas, could be taken only after they had been examined by a police officer and had received a stamp of approval. The government obviously believed that paper could be used to smuggle secret information, using invisible ink or some other means. Books could be sent separately by mail, where censors carefully screened them. Many of the more valuable books we sent, such as the four volumes of the Encyclopedia Judaica (in German), never arrived at the destination. We were not allowed to take any money with us, Romanian or any other kind of currency.

Some of the valuables, such as paintings and silverware, we divided between Uncle Joseph and Gherda. The rest, such as furniture and household goods, we had to sell at ridiculously low prices. The buyers knew that we had to sell our belongings, and that we will accept any price. Besides, since we could not take money with us, we would have to leave it behind anyway, with relatives. What we could not sell, we gave away. Most of the money we made from the sale was spent to purchase airline tickets for the flight to Vienna.

Uncle Joseph went to Suceava to help my mother pack her few belongings, and sell or give away whatever she left behind. Among the items discarded were our family pictures, including pictures from my childhood. Then Mother and Uncle Joseph took the train for Bucharest. But things rarely go smoothly. The moment the train left the station, Mother happened to look out the rail car window and noticed that the trunk with her belongings that was supposed to be loaded on the train had been left behind on the station's platform. Mother and Uncle Joseph got off at the next station and took a return train to Suceava. As it turned out, paying the shipping fee to the stationmaster was not sufficient to have the wooden trunk put on the train. Several other

people had to be bribed to do the job. After paying the bribes, the trunk was loaded on the next train, and Uncle Joseph and Mother eventually arrived in Bucharest together with Mother's belongings.

We left Bucharest in April 1963 on a Tarom (the Romanian airline) flight to Vienna: Mother, Suzi, Gabi, and myself. Uncle Joseph, Aunt Ruchel and Gerda accompanied us to the airport. It was an emotional, tearful parting. I felt that I might never see my uncle and aunt again. After armed border guards checked our documents, we boarded the plane. I had a window seat and could still wave to my relatives left behind. Shortly thereafter, the plane took off. I felt physically and emotionally exhausted. I realized that another chapter of my life had come to an end, and a new one was just beginning. What the new chapter will be like I had no idea.

It was a cloudy day and the plane disappeared quickly in the clouds. Looking out through the window I could not see the landscape of the country I was leaving. All I could see was the cloud cover that stretched all the way to the horizon. When we flew over the Carpatian Mountains high above the clouds, I could see only some of the taller mountain peaks piercing the clouds. These peaks looked like dark, rocky islands floating on a white sea of foam.

I leaned back into my seat, closed my eyes, and led my thoughts drift again into the past. I had left behind the country were I had spent 35 years of my life. Those years, lived under different dictatorships, had been difficult years. I grew up in an increasingly hostile and abusive environment, from which my parents were unable to protect me. I had witnessed many outrages and swallowed many insults. The taunting and beating in elementary school, the cruel and despotic behavior of some of my teachers in lyceum, the years of anguish—with the fear of a beating, fear of arrest, fear of deportation-- all have left deep scars on my psyche.

I had experienced in that country dictatorship of the right and of the left: from the fascism of Cuza—Goga and that of the Antonescu regime, to the communist dictatorship of Gheorghe Gheorghiu--Dej and acolytes. I have seen that country's anti-Semitism in its most brutal forms under the fascist regimes, and in a more subtle form under the communists. I felt that the persecutions I had been exposed to prior and during the war had robbed me of my childhood. They had hampered my ability to form close personal relationships with others

and had created difficulties in my social life. The unpredictable life under communism, the constant uncertainty what tomorrow might bring, the fear of expressing my own thoughts and opinions even to my closest friends, the gloomy outlook for the future—all these had brought little joy into my adult life. A broken marriage did not help either.

Many episodes from the past are still vividly imprinted in my mind. The image of a column of miserable men, women, and children under military guard, trotting towards a cattle train to be deported. The anguish felt in the middle of the night during the Soviet "resettlement" program, of waiting to hear the knock at the door by the NKVD men. The experience of being grabbed on the street, pushed into a car, and hauled off to a secret place for interrogation by the Romanian secret police, the "*Securitate*." The feeling of being sold like cattle by the Romanian communist government in order to regain my freedom. Such events cannot be forgotten regardless of how much time had passed. I learned that brutality and inhumanity perpetrated by the extreme left can be as painful and outrageous as that perpetrated by the extreme right. I also learned that exceptional circumstances bring out the best and the worst of human nature: some people will turn into vicious beasts, others will show unscrupulous greed and selfishness, while still others will rise above depravity to maintain their dignity and humanity.

Looking back into my past, I realized that through most of my life I had felt like a second class human being. Under the fascists I was the Jew, the "*jidan*" that can be spit on, kicked, and mocked by every hoodlum at will. Under the Soviets I was one of the "*mestnye*," one of the "locals" that had lived under capitalism and therefore cannot be trusted. Under the Romanian communists I was the offspring of a bourgeois family, a person with an "unhealthy" social origin. Moreover, many Romanians, even party members, saw me as a Jew, even if they did not say it for political reasons; but I could feel it from their attitude, their behavior towards me. True, I had been given a good position in the academic world, but that was at a time when the university was desperate for qualified personnel to teach and train the new, communist intelligentsia. Lately I had seen the writing on the wall. I knew that my days at the university were coming to an end, that a member of the new, party-educated cadre will replace me.

Many of the outrages that have poisoned my childhood and adolescence still cast their dark shadows over me. After all these years, the images from the past linger in my memory and still haunt me. I was and remain entangled with my past. Still, there are also a few pleasant memories, such as hiking trips in the Carpatian Mountains, occasional concerts at the Atheneum Palace, the boat trip on the Black Sea.

I was shaken from my thoughts by the jolt of the plane landing at Schwechardt airport near Vienna. After taxiing briefly on the runway, the door of the plane opened and I stepped down on Austrian soil. A chapter in my life had come to an end. A new one was just beginning.

After going through passport control and customs, we were received by two well-dressed gentlemen. They were the representatives of Hias, the Jewish-American aid organization. They told us that we would have to spend some time in Vienna, until our immigration into the country of our destination can be arranged. In the mean time we will live in an apartment in Vienna, paid for by Hias. Since they knew that we had arrived with empty pockets, they gave us some Austrian Schillings, the local currency.

Mother and I were given a room in a modest apartment in the center of the city on Mariahilfer Strasse, not far from the Ring. The apartment belonged to a Mrs. Hammerl, an elderly widow who supplemented her pension by renting out rooms. Suzi and Gabi got a room in another apartment. The following morning we met again with the representatives of the Hias. After filling out a series of forms and giving them information about my education and qualifications, they told me that I could choose from several countries. I could go to Israel, in which case I could leave within a few days, either directly or via Rome. I could also go to other countries, such as the United States, Australia, or Brazil. In that case, the processing of the immigration papers would take several months. My mother can join me, they said, as long as I take the responsibility to support her. Suzi and Gabi, however, will have to go to Israel, since her parents lived there.

It was the first time that I was given a choice regarding my future. It was a dizzying feeling. Suddenly I had to decide how and where to live the rest of my life. I was overwhelmed. Having lived under totalitarian regimes, completely isolated from the West, I knew very little what life was like in those countries.

Should I go to Israel, the country I dreamed of in my early youth? Or should I go to America? In my childhood the kids used to say that in America the streets are paved with gold; but they also told stories about Al Capone and the Chicago gangsters. Or should I go to Brazil, with beautiful Rio de Janeiro and its fascinating women? I was in a quandary. The Hias people knew that such decisions are not easy to make, and gave me several days to think it over.

I started inquiring about the outlook for people with my qualifications in different countries. In Israel, I was told, there was a surplus of scientists and professionals, and that it would not be easy for me to find a job in my profession. In America, however, I was told that the situation was different. It was the post-Sputnik era, and the U.S. government and industry were pouring large amounts of money into scientific and technical research. The people from Hias assured me that I could find easily a position either in the academic field, or in an industrial research laboratory. In other countries there was also a demand for scientists and engineers, but not to the same extent as in the U.S.

The decision came down to choosing between Israel and America. It was not an easy decision. In Israel I had my sister and her family, who wanted us to join them. Gabi will also be living in Israel. But the outlook for a good position there was slim. In the U.S., however, I had only a few friends, among them the Mayer family. But there I could get readily a position of my choosing in my profession. After discussing with mother and acquaintances that had more knowledge than I had about the situation in the world, I decided eventually to go together with my mother to the U.S. If I settled in America I was told, I could travel any time to Israel to visit my family; or, if I wanted, I could settle later in that country.

I informed Hias of my decision, and was told that it would take several months to process my papers. They promised to pay the rent until the day of our departure, then gave us some money for food and local transportation. Several days later Suzi and Gabi left for Israel. It was a tearful good-by for me and for Gabi. I promised to come and see him as soon as possible. It was the first time that I was separated from my son, but I knew that I would see him again, soon.

Indeed, I did.

With time on hand, I started exploring Vienna. It was my first contact with a major city in what was called at that time the "free world." I knew about Vienna from stories told by my parents during my childhood. Father had been there during World War I, and had studied law at the Vienna university. It was the city of the Hapsburgs, where Empress Maria Theresa and a row of emperors held court, the city where Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, and Strauss composed some of the finest music the world had known. My parents always described the city as a major cultural center located on the shores of the blue Danube. It was the capital of the Austrian–Hungarian Empire until 1918, when the empire collapsed. I still recall the admiration felt by my parents for its last Emperor, Franz-Joseph. They grew up under his rule and spent their childhood and youth in his empire. Now I was finally able to see this historic, beautiful city. I went sight seeing with a vengeance. I visited the Hofburg, with its luxurious imperial apartments, and goggled at the imperial treasures. Descended into the somber Capuchins' crypt, where an array of emperors and empresses lay peacefully in their embellished, metallic caskets. Admired the dancing and jumping of the white Lippizaner horses at the Spanish riding school. Visited the palaces of Schoenbrun and Belvedere. Went twice to the Museum of Fine Arts (*Kunsthistorisches Museum*), and admired the huge collection of artworks assembled by the Hapsburgs over centuries. I walked on the Ring from the Burg Theatre to the State Opera, turned on the Kaerntnerstrasse and walked to the Stephansdom. From there I went to the Graben, passing the glittering shops lining the street. I tried to absorb in my mind whatever I saw: the magnificent historic buildings, the wide boulevards, and the elegant shops with charming display windows. I watched the well-dressed people walking leisurely on the streets, or enjoying coffee and pastry at an outdoor café. I felt like a child let loose in a candy store. Day after day I walked from morning till evening, and by the end of the day I could barely stand on my feet. I had discovered a New World, and wanted to see as much of it as possible. I had to make up for all those years I had spent behind the Iron Curtain. Whatever I saw impressed me: from the abundance of fine merchandise attractively displayed in the store windows, to the sumptuous chambers of the imperial palace. What impressed me the most was the calm, relaxed attitude of the people on the street. In Bucharest, under the communists, the pedestrians usually were grim faced,

tense and always in a hurry. In Vienna, nobody seemed to be in a hurry. I learned later that the leisurely attitude of the Viennese was called "Gemuetlichkeit."

Walking on the streets of Vienna brought back old memories. I recalled Austria as the birthplace of good and evil in central Europe. It was the birthplace of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart and of Adolf Hitler, the country where Johan Strauss and Adolf Eichman had grown up. I recalled also the famous Jewish writers that had lived in Austria in the second half of the 19th century and in the early part of the 20th century. Most of them had lived and written their most important works in this beautiful city: the novelists Arthur Schnitzler, Stefan Zweig, Franz Kafka, and Max Brod, essayist Felix Salten, and poet Hugo von Hofmanstahl. Their contribution to Austrian literary life had been enormous. Before the war we had many works of those writers in our house. I had a strange, elevating feeling when I realized that I was walking on the same streets on which they had walked, and sipped occasionally a cup of hot mocha coffee in one of the cafes where they had heated literary debates. These great writers, however, belonged to the world of yesterday, a world that did not exist anymore.

I also recalled Sigmund Freud, who had lived in Vienna from his early childhood to his death at age eighty-two. Many of his theories were and still are a subject of debate, but one of his theories was proven right by the Nazis. Before the war, Freud had been criticized for denying the supremacy of culture over instinct. However, his opinion that the barbaric instinct in man cannot be eradicated, regardless how cultured man is, had been confirmed in the most terrible way during the Nazi-fascist rule over Europe. After the events witnessed during these horrible years, it became difficult to be an optimist about human nature.

During the second week of my stay in Vienna I met Felix Albrecht, a mathematician from Romania, who also was waiting in Vienna to have his immigration papers processed. We knew each other from Bucharest, where we had met occasionally. He suggested that I try to find a temporary position at the University of Vienna. I thought it was a good idea, since I did not know how long it would take to get my immigration visa for the U.S. The next day I visited the Technical University, and asked to see the head of the inorganic chemistry

chair. That is when I met Professor Victor Gutmann. He was a gentleman in his forties, with sharp features and thin nose, polite manners and friendly attitude. I told him where I came from and of the likelihood of spending several months in Vienna. I described to him my education and experience at the University of Bucharest, and showed him my Ph.D. diploma together with a list of my scientific publications that I put together from memory. I then asked him if it would be possible for me to do research work for several months in his laboratory. First he expressed surprise that I spoke German; he did not expect that people coming from Romania, who are not of German extraction, would speak that language. He then said that he would be glad to accept me, since there was a shortage of research personnel in his department. My fluency in German probably also contributed to his decision. The salary was modest, but for me it was sufficient. Two days later I started my work at the university.

I worked four months in the laboratory for inorganic chemistry at the Technical University. Since it was summer time, students and assistants were on vacation and I spent most of the time by myself, working on my project. The assignment given to me by Professor Gutmann was to develop a polarographic method to measure the concentration of a certain organic compound in solution. I was familiar with this method from my work in Bucharest, and was able to make progress without much effort.

Occasionally, one or two graduate students appeared in the lab, worked for a day or two, and then disappeared for the rest of the week. There was also an assistant, whose preferred topic of conversation was boxing and horse racing. He also spent a good deal of his time at these events. The Viennese *Gemuetlichkeit* was quite noticeable at the university, especially in the summer. In my spare time I continued to explore Vienna. I also started to learn English, to prepare myself for the U.S.

In mid September the Hias informed me that the preparation of the immigration papers to the U.S. was nearing completion. It would take another month before we would be able to leave for America. Mother and I discussed how to use best the few weeks left before our departure to the New World. We both wanted to see Bertha and her family, since we had not seen my sister since she left Czernowitz in 1944. I also was missing Gabi. We decided to use the money I earned at the university to purchase airline tickets for Israel. We

planned to stay there for one or two weeks, and then return to Vienna. We learned, however, that the cost of the airline tickets was more than we expected. I phoned my sister, told her about our plan, and asked her if she could lend us some money for the airline tickets. I promised to pay off my debt to her—the money she paid for my buyout and for the airline tickets-- as soon as I start working in the U.S. She agreed and sent the money by cable.

It took me several days to complete my work at the university. I wrote a detailed report about the work done and gave it to Professor Gutmann for publication. I also told him that this would conclude my research in his laboratory. He had words of praise for my work, and was disappointed that I was leaving. He had become accustomed to see me daily working in the lab, and was pleased that I generated a scientific publication in a relatively short time. Then he made me an offer: he was willing to give me a permanent position in his department. My fluency in German would allow me to teach, and I could continue to do scientific research work together with him. He assured me that the university administration could obtain from the Austrian authorities a permanent resident permit for me.

Naturally, I was very pleased to hear such words of praise. The offer of a position at the prestigious Technical University of Vienna was quite attractive. Never before has anybody appreciated my professional performance or offered me such a good position. I thanked professor Gutmann and told him that I will consider the offer and that I will inform him of my decision within the next few days.

In the few months that I spent in Vienna I had had time to learn more about the Viennese and the Austrians in general. The initial awe inspired by the glitzy shops on Kaerntnerstrasse, by the imperial palaces and majestic monuments, as well as by the relaxed, comfortable lifestyle of the Viennese, gave way gradually to a more realistic appraisal. I began to realize that many of the city's buildings, even some historic buildings, had not seen a fresh coat of paint for many years. I also found out that the beautiful but expensive merchandise on display in the stores on Kaerntnerstrasse was not accessible to everybody. Not because the people who did not belong to the political party in power were not allowed to shop in those stores, as was the case in Romania, but because the merchandise was too expensive. In Romania, money played a

somewhat minor role in life, since even with money there was not much to buy for the average citizen. In Vienna, however, I learned quickly that money played a key role in everybody's life. Talking to different Viennese during my stay in Vienna—colleagues, neighbors, and the landlady—I learned that most of them were far from happy. To the customary greeting *Wie gehts*? (How are you?), the usual answer was a deep sigh and a litany of complains: about arthritis or some other health problem, about the lack of money, about high taxes, and, in general, about the miseries of life. Many older Austrians talked with nostalgia about the "good old days" under Emperor Franz Joseph, when Austria was a mighty empire and life apparently was wonderful. My initial impression of general contentment soon evaporated.

Other discoveries I made during my stay in Vienna were even more disappointing. In the few months I spent in the city, I discovered that many of the polite, neatly dressed middle-aged and older people had been enthusiastic supporters of Adolph Hitler. From the local newspaper *Der Kurier* I learned that several former commandants of concentration camps were on trial in Vienna. Eventually the Austrian judges acquitted them. Under the Nazi regime, many Austrians held high positions in the SS, in the Gestapo, and in the *Wehrmacht*. After all, the Fuehrer himself was Austrian. I learned about the Austrian Ernst Kaltenbrunner, one of the top Nazies convicted at Nurenberg for crimes against humanity, and hanged. I heard about the horrible deeds perpetrated by Franz Stangel, the infamous Austrien Nazi commandant of the Sobibor and Treblinka extermination camps. By talking to local Jews, whom I met on Saturdays at the synagogue, I learned that anti-Semitism was still alive and widespread among Austrians, although it was usually hidden behind a veneer of cold politeness.

All that information about the Austrians led me to conclude that this is not an environment in which I would like to spend the rest of my life. Although the academic position at the Technical University was attractive, I decided not to accept it. I returned to Professor Gutmann, told him that I had decided to emigrate to the U.S., and thanked him again for his offer and assistance during my work at the university. We parted on friendly terms.

In September 1963 Mother and I took an El-Al flight to Israel—my first flight of many visits to that country. The flight was not very enjoyable. As we flew

over the Alps, our propeller-driven plane suddenly run into heavy thunderstorms. The ride became bumpy and then it turned really rough. It felt like being on a ship in a storm, tossed about by powerful waves. Menacing dark-gray clouds, periodically illuminated by blinding lightning followed by frightening thunder surrounded the airplane. Occasionally, the lightning showed some snow-covered mountain peaks protruding through the clouds, in what appeared to be in very close proximity. The plane shook and creaked, dropped and rose again, struggling to make its way through these threatening surroundings. Mother and I, pale and frightened, held on for life at the side arms of our seats. It did not take long and I threw-up into the sick-bag. Mother, however, was better at controlling herself. As suddenly as we entered into the middle of the thunderstorm, that suddenly did we emerge from the confine of the dark clouds and flew into open, blue sky. We both were still shaken long after we left the storm behind and flew over the green planes, blue lakes and meandering streams of northern Italy. The remainder of the flight was uneventful. But I will remember that flight for a long time.

The plane touched down at Lod airport, near Tel-Aviv, and came to a halt close to the terminal building. There was a big commotion on the plane. Since it took awhile for the doors to open, people pushed to the windows to get a first look at the "Holy Land." Most passengers were Jewish tourists or immigrants, and their excitement of having arrived in the Jewish land was palpable. When the doors finally opened, people spilled out from the plane into the bright, sunlit tarmac. In front of us was the whitewashed terminal building with a large sign in Hebrew and English over the entrance, saying, "Welcome to Israel." On the tarmac, several soldiers dressed in khaki and carrying submachine guns over their shoulders watched the arriving passengers. "Jewish soldiers" said a small boy to his mother in Yiddish, pointing at them with his little finger. "Israeli soldiers" replied his mother with pride in her voice.

Upon my arrival in Israel, before meeting the family, I had a strange experience. After going through passport control, Mother and I left the restricted area of the airport and started walking towards the visitor section, where we expected to meet our family. The visitor section was separated from the restricted area by a thick glass wall. How great was my surprise when I saw behind the glass wall about two dozen pretty young girls smiling, jumping and

frantically waving at me, some with flowers in their hands. I could also hear muffled screams of joy coming from behind the glass wall. First I thought that all tourists and immigrants arriving in Israel get such a warm welcome. I quickly became aware, however, that all those pretty girls were smiling and waving only at me, and paid no attention to the other arriving passengers. Realizing that, I was astonished, but also extremely flattered. I felt like a star, without knowing the cause of that adulation. Only the following day did I find out from my nieces what actually happened at the airport, and the reason for my enthusiastic reception.

Shortly before our plane landed, a British rock-and-roll band had arrived from London on another plane. The band was well known in Israel from its recordings, and a large group of girls was waiting for the players at the airport. The girls apparently did not know what the band players looked like, but knew that they were eccentric types. When I walked out from the restricted area of the airport, I was wearing the hat and coat that I brought with me from Romania. Both hat and coat were completely outmoded compared to the fashion worn at the time in the "free world." I wore a wide-brimmed hat, compared to the narrow-brimmed hats worn in the West and in Israel; my coat was long and had wide lapels, compared to the much shorter coats with narrow lapels worn in the West. Seeing me dressed in cloths that people used to wear before those teenagers were born, the young girls concluded that I am one of those eccentric band players. The result was that they all smiled and waved at me. It was a case of mistaken identity. Realizing that all those cheers were for somebody else, my ego was quickly deflated like a punctured balloon. I was disappointed, but briefly I had my moment of glory.

Inside the terminal building, after passing the group of cheering teenagers, I walked with my mother into the airport lobby. There was a noisy crowd, waiting for the arriving passengers. A group of agitated people, led by a middle-aged woman, approached us. Only when the woman stretched out her arms towards us, her face radiating with joy, did I realize that it was my sister Bertha. She was followed by Shmuel and by three girls, which I assumed were her daughters. My first reaction was shock. Bertha had changed so much since we parted in Czernowitz in 1944! She had deep furrows on her tanned face, and

looked very different from the way I remembered her as a 20-year old girl. Her looks were proof not only that time has left its mark, but also that life has been hard for her. Glancing at my mother, I saw that she was also startled by the way Bertha had changed since she left us19 years ago. The change in Shmuel's appearance was less marked since I saw him last time in Czernowitz, although he had creases on his face and looked more mature. The daughters—Rachel, 16, Josepha, 13, and Ilana, 8, ---were all lively, bright-eyed girls, with long, shining blond hair and cheerful smiles on their faces. After embracing and a brief chitchat about our trip, we left the airport.

Two taxis took us to Bertha's apartment in Yad Eliahu, a suburb of Tel-Aviv. After having lived in a cramped apartment in Romania and in a single room in Vienna, Bertha's apartment looked to me spacious. She had two small bedrooms, a living room that served at night as a bedroom, a small kitchen and a bathroom. The kitchen had a small balcony with the view of a courtyard. Only later did I realize that for a family her size, the apartment was far from spacious. Having two guests to accommodate meant that the girls had to sleep on the floor, in sleeping bags.

We talked late into the night, recounting to Bertha and her family about the events we confronted in the past 19 years, first under the Soviets and then in Romania. Bertha, in turn, told us about her and her family's life. She told us of the difficulties both she and Shmuel encountered trying to reach Palestine after they came to Bucharest in 1945. About their lengthy travel through Bulgaria, Turkey, Syria, and Lebanon until they reached the Holy Land. Their life in *tzrif*—a wooden shack in which they had to cope with the heat and flies in the summer and with the rain that leaked through the roof in the winter. About the war of independence and the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, and later the "Suez war" in 1956. She told us about the long hours of daily work in a harsh climate. It had not been an easy life for them, but they did not feel any regrets. Bertha and Shmuel said that in spite of the difficulties, they would not live in another country. They seemed satisfied with their life.

The next day I went to visit Gabi. I was looking forward to see him—I missed him during the few months of separation. He was 4 years old and could not understand why he could not be together with both parents. It was not easy to explain it to him. Needless to say that we were very happy to see each other.

The first question he asked was about the airplane that brought me to Israel; how big it was, how many engines it had, how high did it fly. Already at that tender age Gabi was very interested in airplanes. At that time I did not imagine that such interest in flying and airplanes will stay with him into his adult life, and will shape his future career.

In the days that followed, Bertha showed us different areas of Tel-Aviv: the bustling Dizengov street, the open-air market (*shuk*), the new apartment buildings under construction for new immigrants. We drank cold "*mitz*" (fruit juice) in sidewalk cafes near the beach, trying to fight the stultifying heat. In the following days we took a tour to Jerusalem. We visited the western side of the city, separated by barbed wire and a no-man's-land from the eastern Arab site. We admired the "City on the Hill" with its white stone buildings, the imposing Knesset building, and historic sites, such as the tomb of King David. We passed Meiashearim, the ultra-Orthodox quarter of the city, where bearded Jews dressed in black garb hurried by, while little boys with long side locks and yarmulkes played on the dusty streets. Only from a distance, across the barbed wire in the Jordanian-occupied part of the city, could we see the gray stones of the Wailing Wall, the gilded Dome of the Rock, the Al Aksa mosque, and the Church of the Holy Sepulcher.

I was deeply impressed by this ancient city, which has been the spiritual center of my people for thousands of years, the city for which Jews had longed throughout their history. The beauty of this City on the Hill, its numerous holy sites of three major religions, the deep religious devotion of some of its inhabitants, the mixture of ancient and modern, all that amazed me. Never before and never since have I felt so deeply touched by a city or any other place as Jerusalem did touch me.

The following day we took a tour to the Dead Sea, that lay surrounded by bare, sun-baked, yellow-brown mountains. We saw Scandinavian tourists covered with curative black mud, lying on the beach in the hot sun, certainly not an every day occurrence in their own country. We visited kibbutz *Ein Gedi*, an oasis in the desert, with its cold spring water and lush-green vegetation that contrasted with the sun-drenched, desolate hills surrounding the kibbutz.

One of the places visited in Tel Aviv was the Diaspora Museum on the Tel Aviv University campus. There I admired the artful exhibits that chronicle the

2000-year history of the Jewish Diaspora. What impressed me the most in this huge, strikingly modern museum building were the faces and names of famous Jews flashed continuously on a screen. In addition to the familiar faces and names of Sigmund Freud, Karl Marx, and Albert Einstein, were those of novelists Marcel Proust, Franz Kafka, Emil Ludwig, Franz Werfel, and Heinrich Heine; philosophers Moses Maimonides, Baruch Spinoza, and Henri Bergson; painters Camille Pissarro, Mark Chagal, Amadeo Modigliani, and Max Liebermann; composers Felix Mendelssohn, Jacques Offenbach, Gustav Mahler, George Gershwin, and Arnold Schoenberg; conductors Bruno Walter, Otto Klemperer, and Pierre Monteux; virtuosi Artur Schnabel, Arthur Rubinstein, David Oistrakh, and Isaac Stern; medical researchers Paul Ehrlich and Jonas Salk; physicists Lise Meitner, Max Born, and Albert Michelson; chemists Fritz Haber and Richard Willstaetter; and a host of other writers, artists, composers, scientists, statesmen, and philanthropists. Those pictures flashing in front of my eyes reminded me of the enormous Jewish contribution to Western civilization in different lands and times. It made me feel proud to belong to a people that had made such an important contribution to human civilization. The pictures also made me aware that the Holocaust perpetrated by the Nazis and their collaborators was not only a calamity for the Jews of Europe. By destroying the genetic pool from which so many brilliant minds have risen in the past, the Holocaust was also a huge loss for Western civilization.

When time came to leave, mother and I were happy to have seen the family and many sites of the Jewish land. The whole family accompanied us to the airport. We parted with tears in our eyes, and promised to see each other soon again. I promised Gabi that I would bring him for a visit to America, after I settled there and find a job.

After returning to Vienna, we started preparing for our trip to the U.S. We packed our few belongings in the same trunk we brought from Romania. The clothing, shoes, and a few pots and pans fitted easily into the crate. The Hias had given us the necessary documents, including the American visas. We departed from Schwechardt airport on October 21, 1963, in a propeller-driven plane, chartered by several immigration organizations, Hias being one of them. The plane carried several hundred immigrants of different nationalities, of

different religions, different cultures, and speaking different languages. Most of the passengers came from countries that were under communist rule and from which they had been able to escape. The plane was buzzing with conversations in Hungarian, Romanian, Polish, Czech, Slovenian, Yiddish, Ukrainian and other undistinguishable languages. Indeed, it was a modern version of the tower of Babel. There were bespectacled intellectuals in rumpled coat and tie, laborers with caps, wool sweaters and rugged worker's pants, peasant women with flowery scarves on their heads and crying babies in their arms, bearded Orthodox Jews dressed in black, and a motley mixture of noisy children of all ages. Still, in spite of their diversity in origin, education and culture, the immigrants had one thing in common: the wish to live in America.

As soon as the plane took off, many of the passengers who were not used to flying became sick and started vomiting. A pervasive, acrid smell spread through the plane, and accompanied us for the rest of the flight. Children began to cry and held on to their parents. Only gradually did they quiet down and fell asleep. Most of the passengers also fell silent, immersed in their thoughts about the life they left behind and the one they were looking forward to.

It was a long flight. The plane refueled in London before crossing the Atlantic. Fourteen hours after leaving Vienna the plane touched down at the New York airport. We had arrived in the New World, the new land of milk and honey. After setting foot on American soil, my mother exclaimed: "We are now in the land of unlimited possibilities." She remembered that description of America given by one of her teachers when she was a young girl in middle school. How right she was!

J. Scherzer: In the Maelstrom

Attachment No. 1

# Sonia

Endlos, endlos, dehnen sich die Steppen,
Vom evigen schnee Sibiriens bedeckt.
Die Felsen ragen wie der Hoelle Treppen,
Kein Sonnenstrahl eine Blume aufgeweckt.

Der Schnee huelt noch die Huett' bis an das Fenster,
Und drinnen hockt ein Mann in Straeflingstracht,
Die fiebrig- heissen Augen sehn Gespenster,
Und dumpf dringt seine Stimme durch die Nacht:

"Sonia, Sonia, deine schwarzen Augen
Kuesse ich im Traume tausend mal,
Kann dich nicht vergessen wunderbare Blumme
Aus dem Wolgatahl.

Einstens sind wir Mann und Frau gewesen,
Ich liebte dich wie nichts auf dieser Welt,
Wie konnte ich in deinen Augen lesen
Dass sich dein Herz einem andern zugewendt.

Ich traf euch beide Lippen an den Lippen,
Um seinen Hals die heissgeliebte Hand,
Da stiess ich ihm das Messer in die Rippen,
Und schwieg, bis man als Moerder mich verbannt.

Sonia, Sonia, deine schwarzen Augen
Kuesse ich im Traume tausend mal,
Kann dich nicht vergessen wunderbare Blume
Aus dem Wolgatahl.

Attachment No. 2

## Der Bettler

Habt Erbarmen, habt Erbarmen,
Seht mein Elend, meine Not,
Gebt mitleidig doch mir Armen
Einen Pfennig oder Brot!

O, wie froh war ich als Knabe,
Von den Eltern hochgeliebt,
Aber, wehe mir, ich habe sie
Bis in den Tod betruebt.

Ich verschmaehte ihre Lehren,
Achtete nicht auf ihre Gunst,
Wollte nichts von Weisheit hoeren,
Nichts von Wissenschaft und Kunst.

Und sie starben. Statt zu sparen
Lebte ich in Saus und Braus,
Und bereits im dritten Sommer
War verschwunden Hof und Haus.

Ach, mein Los ist nun zu darben,
Traute Kinder, seht mich an,
Jammer, Elend sind die Garben
Die die Torheit ernten kann.

J. Scherzer: In the Maelstrom

Attachment No. 3

## Die Baeume

Ich hab' die Baeume gar zu geme
Und freu' mich ihrer wie ein Kind,
Weil ich aus ihrem Treiben lerne
Dass sie der Menschen Freunde sind.

Den Knaben schon erfuellt's mit Wonne,
Sein Herz und Auge lacht entzueckt,
Wenn in des Lenzes warmer Sonne
Der Baum mit Bluehtenschnee sich schmueckt.

Und sieht der Juengling oft betroffen
Auf seiner Bahn das Glueck entfliehn,
So zeigt der Baum auf neues Hoffen
Mit seinen gruenen Armen hin.

Wenn in des Mittags heisser Schwuele
Des Mannes Kraft ermatted sinkt,
So ist's der Baeume Schattenkuehle
Die liebevoll zur Rast ihm winkt.

Und liegt er endlich laengst vergessen
Im Grabe unterm Rasendach,
Dann weinen Weiden und Cypressen
Ihm noch so manche Traene nach.

Attachment No. 4

Die Raeuber
(Parodie von Schillers "Die Buergschaft")

Das Oranienburger Lager
Der Fuehrer just inspiziert,
In einer Zelle grad'
Ein Kommunist Schillers Werke studiert.
Drauf bleibt der Fuehrer erstaunt stehn
Und spricht zum Kommunisten:
"Hast endlich doch eingesehn
Dass wir Nazionalsozialisten sind,
Trotz aller Gegner gross' Geschrei,
Die einzig richtige Partei."
Worauf der Kommunist sich erhebt
Und lacht ihm ins Gesicht;
"Schiller Nazionalsozialist?
Das glaubst Du selber nicht!"
Darauf der Fuehrer wutentbrannt:
"Das wagt er mir zu sagen!?
Dafuer wird ihm von Henkers Hand
Noch heut' der Kopf abgeschlagen!"
"Ich bin," spricht jener, "zum Sterben bereit,
Doch bitt' ich Dich gewaehr mir drei Minuten Zeit,
Bis ich Dich vom Wahne befreit,
Und Dir bewiesen—trotzdem's mir fatal ist,
Dass Schiller international ist.
Er schrieb als internationaler Mann
Fuer Frankreich "Die Jungfrau von Orlean,"
Er schrieb, wie Dir wohl bekannt,
"Maria Stuart" fuer England,
Er schrieb, das weiss jedes Kind bereits,
"Wilhelm Tell" doch fuer die Schweiz;
Und ist Dir unbekannt geblieben
Was fuer Italien er geschrieben?
Ich las heut' frueh in aller Ruh
"Die Braut von Messina" und "Fiasco" dazu;
Ich las heut' frueh in der Burg von Oranien
Dass Schiller geschrieben "Don Carlos" fuer Spanien."--
"Halt!" schreit der Fuehrer krebsrot im Gesicht,
"Und fuer Deutschland, Schurke, schrieb Schiller nichts?"
"O doch, mein Herr, gewehrt mir die Bitte,
Fuer das heilige Deutsche Reich das Dritte,
Wo tausende Gelehrte emigriert,
Wo tausende Menschen sterilisiert,
Wo gottverlassene braune Horden
Tempel schaenden und Juden morden,
Wo auf der Flucht erschossen man fand ihre Leiber,
Dem Lande schrieb Schiller das Drama "Die Raeuber."

Attachment No. 4A

## The Bail
(Parody on Schiller's "The Bail")
English translation

The infamous camp of Oranienburg
The Fuehrer came to inspect,
There, an inmate, leaning on a pillar,
Was avidly reading the works of Schiller.

The Fuehrer stopped before the inmate
And smugly said to a subordinate:
"This man has finally seen the light
The works of Nazis he recognized."

At this the man rose from his place
And laughed the Fuehrer in his face.
"Schiller a Nazi? You must be mad!
Even you could never believe that."

At this the tyrant flew into a rage:
"How dare you say to me such outrage,
For this insult, without delay,
With your own head you'll have to pay!"

"I am'" said the inmate," ready to die,
But grant me three minutes for a reply,
So I can free you from your fixations
And prove that Schiller wrote for many nations.

He wrote as international man
For France "The Maiden of Orlean',"
He wrote, as you may know first-hand
"Maria Stuart" for England;

He also wrote, on the other hand,
"Wilhelm Tell" for Switzerland,
Remember for Italy what he begot?
"The Bride from Messina" and "Fiasco" on top.
With open mind, without disdain
Schiller had written "DonCarlos" for Spain."

"Stop!" yelled the tyrant, as if snake-bitten,
"And for Germany, scoundrel, had Schiller not written?"
"O, master, allow me to tell you what I have heard,
What Schiller had written for the Reich, the Third,
Where thousands of innocents are savagely brutalized,
Where God-forsaken gangs have temples vandalized,
Where in despair, thousands have emigrated,
And defenseless Jews are daily denigrated,
Where those were shot who tried to escape,
To that country, "The Robbers" did Schiller dedicate."

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